The Resurrection Life Study Bible ™

--A revolutionary look at the New Testament

by Vince Garcia

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For those who would like to read this Bible in a Text Only format, I am offering this version, though I recommend the Regular edition over it.* The Regular edition contains all the important information, especially why some verses herein are rendered as they are. But if the reader wishes to have an easier-to-read format, this should do nicely.

* Check my other uploads for that version and also my KIDS GOSPEL OF MARK.

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Matthew

MATTHEW CHAPTER 1

1 This is a record of the ancestry of Jesus the Messiah, inheritor of David's throne, and descendant of Abraham.
2 Abraham [Father of a Multitude] fathered Isaac [Laughter]; and Isaac fathered Jacob [Heel-catcher or Supplanter]; and Jacob fathered Judah [He Shall be Praised] and his brethren;
3 And Judah fathered Perez [A Breach] and Zara [Rising] of Thamar [Date Palm]; and Perez fathered Esrom [Enclosed]; and Esrom fathered Aram [High];
4 And Aram fathered Aminadab [One of the Prince's People]; and Aminadab fathered Naasson [Enchanter]; and Naasson fathered Salmon [A Garment];
5 And Salmon fathered Boaz [In Him is Strength] of Rahab [Wide]; and Boaz fathered Obed [Serving] of Ruth [Female Friend]; and Obed fathered Jesse [Wealthy];
6 And Jesse fathered David [Beloved] the king; and David the king fathered Solomon [Peaceful] of bat Sheba [Daughter of the Oath], who had been the wife of Urias;
7 And Solomon fathered Roboam [Enlarger of the People]; and Roboam fathered Abijah [My Father is Yah]; and Abijah fathered Asa [Doctor];
8 And Asa fathered Josaphat [Whom Yahweh Judges]; and Josaphat fathered Joram [Whom Yahweh Has Exalted]; and Joram fathered Ozias [Strength of Yahweh];
9 And Ozias fathered Joatham [Yahweh is Upright]; and Joatham fathered Achaz [Possessor]; and Achaz fathered Hezekiah [The Might of Yahweh];
10 And Hezekiah fathered Manasses [Forgetting]; and Manasses fathered Amon [Builder]; and Amon fathered Josias [Whom Yahweh Heals];
11 And Josias fathered Jechonias [Whom Yahweh Establishes] and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon:
12 And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias fathered Salathiel [I Have Asked of God]; and Salathiel fathered Zorobabel [Born in Babylon];
13 And Zorobabel fathered Abiud [My Father is Majesty]; and Abiud fathered Eliakim [Raising Up by God]; and Eliakim fathered Azor [Helper];
14 And Azor fathered Zadoc [Just]; and Zadoc fathered Achim [The Lord Will Establish]; and Achim fathered Eliud [God His Praise];
15 And Eliud fathered Eleazar [Help of God]; and Eleazar fathered Matthan [Gift]; and Matthan fathered Jacob [Heel-catcher or Supplanter];
16 And Jacob fathered Joseph [Let Him Add], the husband of Miriam [Rebel], of whom was born Jesus [Yahweh is Salvation] who is called Christ--the Anointed One.
17 So there are fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen generations from David to the forced exodus to Babylon, and fourteen generations from that to the birth of the Messiah.
18 Now the circumstances of Jesus Christ's birth were these: While his mother Miriam was engaged to Joseph--before they were married and living together--she, though a virgin, was found to be pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit.
19 Her fiancé Joseph, a just man [who was unwilling to put her through the public humiliation of the *Sotah* ceremony for alleged adulteresses], considered divorcing her quietly.
20 But while he was debating what to do about these things, the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a dream, and said: Joseph, descendant of David--don't hesitate to go through with this marriage to Miriam, for her unborn child was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit.
21 She will give birth to a son whom you will name Yeshua [--or *Jesus* in the Greek tongue, which means 'God is Salvation'--] because he will save his people from their sins.
22 This all happened so that a prophecy spoken by the Lord through the prophet Isaiah could come to pass:
23 *Behold, a young [virgin] girl shall become pregnant, and give birth to a son that shall be named Emmanuel*, which means 'God is in our midst'.
24 Awakening, Joseph heeded the angel's words and went through with the marriage.
25 But he did not sleep with Miriam at any time during the pregnancy, and finally a boy child was born whom Joseph named Yeshua [Jesus].

MATTHEW CHAPTER 2

1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the latter days of Herod the Great, some sages came to Jerusalem from the east.
2 They asked: Where is he who is born the King of the Jews? [In Babylon,] we saw his star arise, proclaiming his birth, and are come to pay homage to him.
3 When Herod the Great heard about this, he became nervous [for his throne], and all Jerusalem trembled with him.
4 So when Herod summoned the chief priests and Torah teachers among the people and demanded to know where the Messiah would be born,
5 They told him: Bethlehem in Judea, for the prophet Micah wrote:
6 **But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.**
7 Then Herod [--concerned about word of this child's existence spreading--] secretly called the visiting sages, and asked exactly when they had first seen the star.
8 [When they answered that it was around a year previously,] he then sent them to Bethlehem, saying: Search diligently for this young child, and let me know when and where you find him, that I may go honor him as well.
9 At Herod's word they departed--and the star they had seen in the east appeared to move before them, and led them to a house [in Bethlehem] where the young child was. And there it halted above the house.
10 At seeing the star do this, the sages greatly rejoiced.
11 They came into the house and found the infant with his mother Miriam, and fell prostrate, reverencing him. Then they opened their packs and presented the family with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.
12 As they slept, God warned them in a dream not to go back to Herod, so they returned to their country by a different route.
13 After they left, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in another dream, and told him: Get up, and flee with the young child and his mother to Egypt, and stay there until I bring word for you to return, for Herod will try to find the babe and slay him.
14 As soon as the dream was over, Joseph awakened and wasted no time in leading his family out of Bethlehem, and they left that same night, fleeing westward to Egypt.
15 They were there until Herod died a short time later, so that a prophecy of the Lord through Hosea could be fulfilled that said: **Out of Egypt have I called my son.**
16 After Herod realized that the sages had gotten the better of him, he was furious, and sent his men out to slay all the male children in and around Bethlehem who were around [one year old or younger,

for the sages said it was around a year earlier that they had seen the star].
17 This was to fulfill a prophecy by Jeremiah:
18 **In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.**
19 Herod died soon after this, and in Egypt an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in another dream,
20 Saying: Get up, and take the baby and his mother back to Israel, for the ones who wanted him dead are now dead themselves.
21 So Joseph arose, gathered up the baby and his mother, and they returned to Israel.
22 But when he heard that Herod's son Archelaus had taken the throne of Judea [--and was already showing himself to be a despot like his father--] he was afraid to go back. On top of that, he had a dream from God not to go back as well, and so he went instead to the region of Galilee.
23 Thus, Joseph came to settle in a hamlet called Nazareth [fulfilling an ancient tradition of the prophets: *He shall be called a Nazarene.*]

MATTHEW CHAPTER 3

1 In the days when Jesus had grown to adulthood but still lived in Nazareth, John [--or *Yochannon* in the Hebrew tongue--] the Baptizer started his ministry in the Judean wilderness,
2 Saying: Repent, for the [Kingdom of the Messiah] is at hand!
3 Now John was the one prophesied of by Isaiah when he wrote: **The voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight**."
4 This same John [--as had Elijah in olden times--] dressed in a garment of camel's hair with a leather girdle about his loins, and he ate [carob beans] and wild honey.
5 Everyone in Jerusalem, Judea, and in the region along the Jordan came,
6 And were baptized by him in the Jordan river, [publicly] confessing their sins.
7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees, [the religious leaders who controlled the synagogues,] and Sadducees, [the priests who controlled the great Temple,] come to his baptism, John railed against them, saying: You bunch of snakes! Who warned *you* to repent and escape God's coming wrath?!
8 Change your attitudes and the way that you act if you've come to repent!
9 Don't think to yourselves, *We're Abraham's descendants [so we have nothing to fear]*! I tell you God can take these rocks you see [--the ones erected by Joshua when the Israelites entered the Promised Land--] and turn *them* into children of Abraham if He wants to!
10 Be warned that God's ax is ready to cut down the trees that bear no good fruit, therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and cast into the fire!
11 I am indeed baptizing you with mere water for repentance, but someone is coming after me--a man whose sandals I am not even worthy to carry--who will baptize with the Holy Spirit, and fire!
12 His fan is in his hand, ready to fan the harvest to separate the wheat and gather it into his barn, but the chaff [--John said about the Pharisees and Sadducees--] he will burn with a fire that will never go out!
13 Eventually, Jesus also came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John.
14 But John tried to stop him, saying: I need you to baptize me, and yet you come to me?
15 Jesus answered: Allow it now, for it's right for us to fulfill all righteousness in this way. So John baptized him.
16 When Jesus came up from the water, John had a vision of the heavens opening up and instantly the Spirit of God descending and resting upon Jesus like a dove.
17 And a voice from heaven said: This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased!

MATTHEW CHAPTER 4

1 Then the Spirit of God led Jesus into the desert to be tempted by the devil.
2 He fasted a full forty days and nights, and at the end was very hungry.
3 When the Tempter came to him [in his weakness], he said: If you're really the Son of God, command a miracle, and turn these rocks into bread!
4 But Jesus answered: It is written in the Scriptures that, *Men shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that God speaks*.
5 Next, the devil took Jesus to the holy city of Jerusalem and set him upon the highest pinnacle of the Temple.
6 He said: Since you're the Son of God, jump down, for it's written in the Scriptures: **He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone**.
7 Jesus' reply was: It is also written in the Scriptures, *You shall not tempt the Lord your God*.
8 Then the devil took Jesus to a very high mountain and gave him a vision of all the world's kingdoms and their glory.
9 He said to Jesus: All these people and nations I will give to you if, falling down, you will do an act of worship to me.
10 Then Jesus said to him: Get away, Satan! It is written, *You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve*!
11 Then the devil left, and angels came and ministered to Jesus.
12 Now when Jesus heard that Herod Antipas had cast John into a dungeon, he went back to Galilee.
13 And after leaving Nazareth, he moved to Capernaum [the city of Nahum the prophet], which is on the coast in the regions assigned to the tribes of Zebulon and Napthali,
14 So a prophecy of Isaiah the prophet would be fulfilled:
15 **The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles;**
16 **The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.**
17 From that point forward, Jesus [took up the message of John, preaching and proclaiming]: Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand!
18 One day, Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee and saw two brothers--Shimon, called Peter, and Andrew his brother--who were casting a net into the great lake, for they were fishermen.
19 Jesus said to them: Follow me, and I will make you fishers of *men*!
20 So the two immediately left their nets, and followed him.
21 Going along the shore, he found two other brothers, James and John, who were mending their fishing nets in a boat with their father Zebedee, and Jesus called them too.
22 So they immediately left the boat and their father, and followed Jesus.
23 Jesus then went all around the region of Galilee, teaching in the synagogues, preaching the "Good news" of the Messianic Kingdom, and healing all sorts of sickness and disease troubling the people.
24 Jesus' reputation spread throughout all Syria, and the people flocked to him with all the sick people who were diseased or in pain, and others who were demon-possessed, insane, or paralyzed--and he healed them!

25 Because of this, massive crowds from Galilee, the "Ten Cities" region, Jerusalem, Judea, and other lands far beyond the Jordan, followed him wherever he went.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 5

1 And seeing the vast host of people, he went up upon a hill [so that his voice could be heard more clearly], and when he had sat down his disciples gathered around him.
2 Then Jesus began to speak, and taught them, saying:
3 Blessed are those who are [humble and contrite], for theirs is Kingdom of heaven.
4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
5 Blessed are the meek, for this earth shall belong to them.
6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.
7 Blessed are those who show mercy to others, for God will show mercy to them.
8 Blessed are those with pure hearts, for God shall reveal Himself to them.
9 Blessed are those who work to bring peace to the earth, for they shall be called the children of God.
10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for doing what is right, for the Kingdom of heaven awaits them.
11 Blessed are you when you're slandered, persecuted, and lied about because you follow me.
12 Rejoice, and be very glad--for you have a great reward waiting for you in heaven since this is how the prophets were persecuted before you!
13 You all, like salt, are those who can season this world [and direct it away from the path of evil]. But if, like diluted salt, you lose that which makes you a force of seasoning [and preservation], what good are you? You are no better than the salt that is strewn in the Temple courts during wintertime that men trample upon.
14 You are all lights in this world, and like a city that is built upon a hill, you cannot hide what you are.
15 Men don't light a candle and hide its light under a basket! They put it in a candlestick so everyone in the house is able to see in the darkness.
16 So let the light of God in you shine before the world so people can see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.
17 Don't misunderstand my purpose, for I have not come to distort or overturn the Law of Moses [as some might be claiming]. I have not come to destroy it, but to fulfill it.
18 I assure you that if it takes to the end of time itself, not so little as one point of minutiae will pass from the commandments--until the whole of the Law completes its ordained purpose!
19 So whoever breaks so little as one commandment, and teaches others some rationale for doing so, will be called the lowest of the low in the Kingdom of heaven! But whoever follows the commandments of God, and teaches others to follow them as well, shall be called a great man in the Kingdom of heaven.
20 But you need to know that unless your righteousness exceeds that of [hypocrites like] the Torah teachers and Pharisees, you have no chance of entering into the Kingdom of heaven.
21 For instance, you've heard it said from ancient times, **Thou shalt not kill**, and whoever murders shall be called to account before the judges.
22 But I want you to know that if you even hold a grudge against a brother in the community, you are in danger of judgment. And if you verbally denounce a brother in the community, you may be taken to court for slander--but if you pass judgment upon another person's salvation or right standing with God when it is not your place to do so, you are in danger of hellfire yourself!
23 Therefore, if you bring a sacrificial gift to the Temple and there recall that a brother has something against you,
24 Leave your gift offering at the altar, go make amends with your brother, and *then* come back to make the offering.
25 If someone sues you in real life, settle your debt before the judge intervenes, even if it's on the courthouse steps--because, if you're in the wrong, the judge may hand you over to the jailer, and he will throw you into Debtor's Prison!
26 I tell you truly, once the gavel comes down, you won't get out of prison until you find a way to pay off every cent of what you owe from behind bars. [And how could you do that, once you're in prison?]
27 [With this in mind,] consider the fact that from days of old, you've heard it said: **Thou shalt not commit adultery**.
28 But I want you to know that a person who simply looks upon another, and fantasizes about them--even if it goes no further--is guilty of adultery in his heart so far as God is concerned [and a price must be paid for that sin]!
29 So if you can't turn your right eye away from an attractive woman or man--pluck it out! It's better to lose an eye than to have your whole body wind up in hell! [Where, like the man in Debtor's Prison, you will stay until you've paid the full debt.]
30 As well, if your hand is used for your own lustful self-gratification--cut it off! Better to have no hand, than to let your hand lead you to destruction, and your whole body wind up in hell! [Where, like the man in Debtor's Prison, you will stay until you've paid the full debt from behind bars.]
31 It's been said that a man who wants to divorce his wife should merely write out a Bill of Divorce, and send her away.
32 But I tell you that as far as God is concerned, any man who divorces his wife for a reason other than her committing fornication, makes her and anyone she subsequently marries, both adulterers [because God still considers her married to her first husband--and the man who divorced her to start with will be called to account for his action that caused two others to wind up in sin]!
33 Again, it's long been taught that a person, to make his word seem more believable, should invoke God as a witness to his promise.
34 But I tell you not to make vows at all! Do not swear at all, or invoke heaven as a witness, for that is where God's throne is.
35 Do not swear by anything upon the earth, for it is God's footstool; nor should you swear by Jerusalem itself, for it is 'the city of the Messiah' [and thus holy].
36 Don't even swear by your own head, because you can't even make one hair white or black.
37 But just agree or disagree to a thing, and leave it at that--because anything else is of the Evil One.
38 You've heard it said that it is acceptable to take reasonable vengeance for wrongs done to you--eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.
39 But I tell you, don't take that attitude against evil done to you. And if someone insults you, ignore it.
40 If anyone wants to sue you for your robe--hand over your cloak, too.
41 If a Roman soldier invokes his right under their law, and compels you to carry his equipment for one mile--carry it for *two* miles!
42 Give to anyone who asks, and don't refuse someone who wants to borrow from you.
43 You have heard it said: "A man should love his neighbor, but hate his enemy."
44 But *I* say to love your enemies as well, and bless those who curse you. Do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who take advantage of or persecute you.

45 In doing this, you will be children of your Father in heaven, for He has the sun rise on the evil as well as the good, and sends rain to good people as well as bad.
46 If you love only those who love you back, what reward is there in that? Even tax collectors [--the most hated people in our society--] do that!
47 And if you wish Godspeed only to those in your own circle of friends, how are you being any better than the tax collectors who do likewise?
48 By doing these things I've told you, you will demonstrate the attributes of your Father in heaven, and thus *be perfect as He is perfect*!

MATTHEW CHAPTER 6

1 Make sure that you never do a good deed publicly--to be praised by others--or your Father in heaven will not reward you!
2 When you give alms, [don't do it publicly] as the hypocrites do, sounding a trumpet so that everyone in synagogues and the streets knows about it and thinks well of you! Those who do their good deeds publicly can count on nothing more than public praise as their only reward.
3 When *you* do something charitable, [do it as secretly as you can], and then never give it another thought.
4 If you do things in secret, the day will come when your Father, who sees things done in secret, rewards you openly, before everyone.
5 Also, when you pray, don't be like the hypocrites who pray loudly and call attention to themselves in the synagogues and the street corners so people marvel at how religious they are! I tell you truly, they have all the reward they will ever get.
6 So when *you* pray to your Father, go do so in a private place, and shut the door so no one knows. Then your Father, who sees everything done in secret, shall reward you openly.
7 Also, when you pray, don't be like the pagans who compose an hour-long monologue, thinking that will convince God to help you.
8 Don't be like them--your Father knows what your needs are before you even ask!
9 Pray simply, like this: *Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.*
10 *Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.*
11 *Give us this day our daily bread.*
12 *And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors*.
13 *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*
14 Remember--if you forgive men who do evil to you, God will forgive your own sins that do evil to Him!
15 But if you refuse to forgive those who wrong you, your Father will not forgive your wrongs either!
16 Also, when you undertake a fast, don't be like the hypocrites who go around looking weak and sickly so everyone can see how religious they are. I want you to know that's the only reward they'll get!
17 So when *you* fast, do it in such a way that you look perfectly normal,
18 So no one but your Father will know what you're doing--and your Father, who sees everything done in secret, shall reward you openly.
19 Don't set your sights on hoarding earthly wealth and possessions that can break, wear out, or be lost to thieves.
20 But set your sights on heaven [and the eternal], and store your treasure up there, where it can never be lost, stolen, or waste away.
21 For where your treasure is, your heart will be.
22 A man with good eyesight has plenty of light to walk by. But a blind man can't do anything but stumble around in darkness.
23 In the same way, if you have a greedy, covetous heart [--instead of a heart that wants to give--] you are trapped in the darkness of spiritual blindness, and are much worse off than a simple blind man.
24 No man can be a slave to two masters; he must choose between them, and love the one while hating the other. So you cannot serve God [who wants you to be a giver], while at the same time you give in to the greedy acquisition of wealth [Satan] tempts you with.
25 This is why I tell you not to worry about your life, wondering what you'll eat or drink; or worry about your body, and what you will clothe it with. Isn't life meant to be more than food, and the body more than clothing?
26 Look at the birds of the air--they don't buy and sell, or invest and profit. But your heavenly Father feeds them just the same. Don't you think you're more important than birds to Him?
27 Which of you, by worrying about it, can add even one hour to your life?
28 And why are you so worried about your clothing? Look at the beauty of the wild lilies growing around us--they don't work for a living, nor do they spin cloth.
29 But even King Solomon, in all his wealth and glory, wasn't clothed in garments any more beautiful than the petals of these flowers [who got their clothing from God Himself].
30 So if God is concerned enough to clothe the grass in the field, which is here one day, and used as kindling the next, why do you have no faith to believe He will clothe *you* without your minds constantly worrying about money, you doubters?
31 Therefore, stop worrying and saying things like, "What shall we eat?" "What shall we drink?" Or, "What shall we wear?"
32 For those are the sorts of things the pagans spend all their time worrying about! Your Father in heaven already knows you need these things.
33 But make your primary emphasis that of finding your part in God's kingdom, and following after His righteousness. Then He will see to it you have all these other things.
34 So don't spend your time worrying about tomorrow, because tomorrow is coming whether you worry about it or not. [God will help you deal with each day's problems as they come.]

MATTHEW CHAPTER 7

1 Don't act as your own judge and jury, lest judgment came back upon *you*!
2 For God will judge you exactly the same way, and to the same degree, that you judge others!
3 And why do some of you think you can see a splinter in the eyes of your brother when you don't realize there is actually a log in your own eye?!
4 How can you say to a brother in the community, "Let me pull that splinter out of your eye, friend," when there's a log in your own?!
5 You hypocrite--worry about removing the log of your own faults from your eye before you concern yourself with removing the splinter of your brother's!
6 [Don't give holy things--like the wisdom or oracles of God--to profane people who think they know it all, lest they trample them down and turn on you like a pack of hungry pigs!]
7 [Regarding prayer:] Ask, and it will be given you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened to you.
8 For everyone who asks shall receive, and everyone who seeks shall find; and the door will be opened to him who knocks.
9 What man of you, for instance, if his son asked him for some bread would give him a rock to eat?
10 Or if he wanted a broiled fish, would hand him a snake?
11 If you fathers, being evil in comparison to your Father in heaven, bless your own children with good things--how much more is your

Father wanting to bless with good things His own children who ask things of *Him*?
12 Therefore, treat everyone with the same goodness and respect you'd want them to treat you with, for this is whole point of the Law and the Prophets.
13 Enter through the small, narrow gate that is often ignored in favor of the wide, easy-to-pass-through gate, for the wide gate leads to destruction and many go through it.
14 You see, the way to life is through the narrow gate, and it is hard, so there are few who find and enter that gate.
15 Beware of false prophets who seem sincere and meek--like sheep--but inwardly are actually ravening wolves.
16 You'll know them by the fruit of what they say and do. Men don't pick Grapes off thorn bushes, nor do they pick figs from thistles, do they?
17 Likewise, good trees bring forth good fruit, and rotten trees bring forth evil fruit.
18 A good tree cannot sprout bad fruit, and a rotten tree cannot sprout good fruit.
19 And rotten trees are cut down and burned up (because their fruit is good for nothing).
20 Thus, by the fruit of what they do, you shall know the good ministers from the bad.
21 Not everyone who pays lip service to me, saying, "Lord! Lord!" will enter the Kingdom of heaven--but only the person who does the will of my Father in heaven.
22 At the Last Judgment, many [who thought they were proclaiming my Word, but actually perverting it], and some who even cast out demons or worked miracles, thinking it was with me behind them, will say to me, "Lord! Lord! Haven't we [proclaimed what you wished us to], and cast out demons, and worked many miracles in your name?!"
23 But I will say back to them, "[I had no part with you!] Get out of my sight, you workers of iniquity!"
24 Thus, whoever hears, understands, and obeys my teachings, is like a wise man who built his house upon solid bedrock.
25 Rains, floods, and winds could not move the house because it was built on the perfect foundation.
26 But anyone who hears my teachings and ignores them is like a fool who built his house on a sandy flood plain.
27 The rain, floods, and winds came against the house and washed it away, and not a trace of it was left!
28 At the conclusion of Jesus' speech, the people were amazed at his doctrines he taught.
29 For he taught with the assurance of someone with absolute authority [whose word was not subject to debate], rather than the Torah teachers [who would say this rabbi taught this, while that rabbi taught that, leaving the people to try to decide whose opinion was the right one].

MATTHEW CHAPTER 8

1 When Jesus descended the mountain, great crowds followed him.
2 Then a man whose skin was stricken with psoriasis or leprosy ran up and knelt at his feet, saying: Lord, if you want to, you can cleanse me of this defiling disease!
3 Jesus reached out and touched the man, saying: I want to--be cleansed from this ailment! And his skin disease was immediately cleansed.
4 Then Jesus told him: See that you don't tell anyone about this miracle, but go to the High Priest and offer up the Gift of Thanksgiving mandated for it in the Law of Moses. That will be a testimony to the Sadducees [about who I am, and that God does indeed do miracles--unlike what they have come to believe].
5 When Jesus entered into the city of Capernaum, a chief Roman centurion who'd heard of him urgently sought him out,
6 Saying: Lord, my slave lies gravely ill in my house, paralyzed and in anguish.
7 Jesus said to him: I will come and heal him.
8 But the centurion answered: Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter into my house. Just command the healing be done, and my slave will be healed.
9 For I am a man under authority, with other soldiers under me, and when I give an order to someone there is no question of its being carried out--I know it will be done. I say, "Go!" to a man and he goes; or "Come!" and he comes; or "Do this!" to a servant, and he obeys.
10 When he heard this, Jesus couldn't believe his ears, and exclaimed to those following along: Truly I say that I have yet to find a Jew in Israel with faith this strong!
11 And I say to you that many [Gentiles] shall come from the east and the west, and rest alongside Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Messianic Kingdom.
12 But the children for whom the Kingdom was created will be cast out of God's presence into outer darkness where there shall weeping and gnashing of teeth.
13 Jesus then said to the centurion: Go your way--as you have believed, let it be done to you! And the [boy] was healed in the same hour!
14 Now when Jesus came into Peter's house, he saw the mother of Peter's wife in bed, sick with a bad fever.
15 He touched her hand, and immediately the fever vanished. Then the woman got up [and prepared food for them].
16 When the sun went down, they brought many people to the house that were plagued by demons, and he cast them out by his command and healed all the people who were sick.
17 This fulfilled a prophecy by Isaiah the prophet: **Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.**
18 When Jesus saw what a commotion was being made over him by the crowd, he told the disciples they should all cross to the other side of the lake.
19 As he was departing, a certain Torah teacher came up, and said: Master, I will follow you wherever you go.
20 But Jesus replied: Foxes have dens, birds of the air have nests--but the Son of Man has not so little as a tent to sleep in. [Are you really prepared for the cost of following me?]
21 Another disciple said: Lord--let bury my father first, and then I will come.
22 But Jesus told *him*: Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead!
22 [*Alternate reading--Aramaic*]: But Jesus told *him*: Follow me, and let the town bury the dead!
23 Then Jesus entered a boat, and his disciples followed.
24 After they departed, a great storm arose in the Sea of Galilee that threatened to swamp the ship. But Jesus was asleep through it.
25 So the disciples awakened him and cried out:
Lord--we're going to drown! Save us!
26 Jesus replied: Why are you afraid, you doubters? Then he stood up in the boat, rebuked the wind and waves, and everything became completely calm.
27 Those aboard were dumbfounded, and said: What sort of man is this that he commands even [the forces of nature]?!
28 And when he crossed over to the region of the Gergesenes, he encountered two demon-possessed men coming out of the tombs, who haunted the graveyards like ghouls, and no one dared travel near them.

29 The demons in them shouted out: What are you here for, Jesus, Son of God? Are you come here to torment us before the time [of the final Judgment]?
30 Now in the distance was a huge herd of pigs feeding.
31 So the demons implored Jesus, saying: If you cast us out, at least send us into those [unclean] pigs [instead of casting us into perdition]!
32 Jesus to them: Go. So the demons left the men and possessed the herd of pigs, driving them off a cliff and into the lake where they drowned.
33 The flock's keepers ran away and spread word of what happened at the nearby town--how that the two
demon-possessed men had been delivered, and the herd of pigs sent into the lake.
34 And the whole city [--afraid--] came out to meet Jesus. But when they saw him, they urged him to go somewhere else and leave them alone.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 9

1 So Jesus returned to the boat and crossed back to Capernaum.
2 Some people there brought up an infirmed man confined to a bed, hoping Jesus would heal him. Noting their faith, Jesus looked at the man, and said: Cheer up, Son--the sins that caused this disease are forgiven.
3 This statement was an affront to some of the Torah teachers who were present, and they thought to themselves, *This man is a blasphemer* [*to put himself in the place of God, and forgive someone's sins*]*!*
4 Jesus knew what they were thinking, and he asked: Why are you thinking evil in your hearts?
5 Is it any easier [--or any less the province of God--] to tell someone his sins are forgiven, than it is to tell an infirmed man, "Get up, and walk"?
6 But that you may know that I, the Son of Man [--the *bar Enash* prophesied of by Daniel--] have the authority on earth to forgive sins, I say to this sick man: Arise, and carry your bed back home!
7 So the man got up and went home!
8 When the people saw this miracle they were amazed, and rejoiced that God had visited them in such a manner, and given such power to men.
9 Now as Jesus passed the city gates, he saw a tax collector named [Matthew] sitting at the collection table, and he told him: Follow me! So [Matthew] left his table behind and followed him.
10 Jesus spent the night at [Matthew's] house, and when dinner was served, many of the tax collectors under [Matthew's] control--and many non-religious friends of his as well--sat down with Jesus and his disciples.
11 But when some Pharisees saw this, they asked the disciples: Why is your rabbi eating with these turncoat tax collectors and those other sinners?!
12 When Jesus heard that, he replied: The healthy aren't the ones who need a doctor--it's the sick!
13 Go and learn what the Scripture means when God says: *I desire mercy, not sacrifice.* You see, I'm not here to call righteous men to repentance; I'm here to reach the sinners!
14 Then some of John the Baptist's followers asked Jesus: Why do we and the Pharisees fast [and afflict our souls] regularly, but your disciples do not?
15 Jesus answered: Do groomsmen mourn at a wedding when the bridegroom is present? But eventually the bridegroom will be taken away from them and then they will fast [and mourn].
16 Also, no one sews a patch of brand new cloth on an old article of clothing, for the mixture of old and new cannot survive the process of washing, and will come apart.
17 Nor do men put fermenting wine in a stiff old wineskin that can crack and spill the contents out. You put new wine into a new wineskin and this keeps both safe.
18 While Jesus was speaking, a head of the local synagogue rushed up and knelt down, saying: My daughter has died, but come touch her, and she will live.
19 So Jesus got up and followed the man back to his house along with his disciples.
20 But as he went, a woman who had suffered a uterine discharge for twelve years hurried up from behind and touched the hem of his prayer shawl.
21 For she said to herself, *If I can only touch his clothing, I will be made whole!*
22 Jesus turned and saw her. Then he said: Daughter, don't be afraid [of what you have risked by touching me in the state you are in]. Your faith has cured you! And indeed, the woman was made whole from that very hour.
23 Jesus finally made it to the synagogue leader's house where a loud mourning party of minstrels and others had assembled.
24 He said to the people: Move out! This girl is not dead, but only asleep. But the people laughed in derision.
25 So Jesus had the mourners expelled from the house, then he went inside and took the child by the hand, and she arose.
26 And the tale of this miracle spread throughout the region.
27 When Jesus left the house, a couple of blind men followed along behind, crying out: Son of David--have mercy on us!
28 After Jesus returned to [Matthew's] house, the two came inside and Jesus asked them: Do you believe I am able to restore your sight? They said: Yes, Lord!
29 He touched each man's eyes, and said: Let it be done to you as you have believed.
30 Then they could see again, and Jesus sternly ordered them: Don't tell anyone about this miracle!
31 But the two couldn't contain their excitement, and after leaving spread word throughout the region what had happened.
32 [Things got so chaotic that Jesus and the disciples left town.] As they were departing, someone brought a man to be healed who had been struck dumb by a demon.
33 After Jesus cast the demon out of him the man was able to speak, and the crowds were amazed once again. They said: Israel has never seen anything like this!
34 But the Pharisees said: He is casting out demons because Beelzebub, Prince of demons, is empowering him!
35 Jesus went everywhere, teaching in the synagogues the good news that the Messianic Kingdom had come, and healing every sickness he came upon.
36 When Jesus saw the vast host of people, he was moved with compassion because they were so desperate to see him that they were getting sick from hunger and lack of water, like sheep with no shepherd to watch after them.
37 He told the disciples: The harvest is rich, but there aren't enough workers to harvest the crops!
38 Pray to the Lord of the Harvest to send workers to bring His harvest in!

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MATTHEW CHAPTER 10

1 And when Jesus called his twelve disciples to him, he gave them authority against demonic spirits, to cast them out, and also gave them the power to heal all manner of sickness and disease.
2 These were the names of his twelve apostles: First was Shimon, who is also called Peter. Then Andrew his brother; and James and John, the sons of Zebedee;
3 Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew the tax collector, James, son of Alphaeus, Lebbaeus [Jude], who is surnamed Thaddeus,
4 Simon the Cananean, and finally Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.
5 Jesus sent these twelve out, telling them: Don't go into any Gentile areas or Samaritan cities.
6 Go instead, he said, to the lost sheep of the House of Israel.
7 As you go, preach: The Kingdom of heaven is at hand!
8 Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, and cast out demons. Take no money for what you do, for freely you have received, so freely give!
9 Don't even take any money with you when you start out,
10 Nor take a sack, extra clothing, shoes or staffs on your journey, for the laborer deserves his pay. [Your needs will be met as they arise.]
11 Whatever city you enter, ask around until you find a just family of good reputation to lodge with, and stay there until you move on.
12 When you enter a house, [pronounce a blessing of peace upon it].
13 And if the household is worthy let your blessing remain. If it is not worthy, let your blessing of peace return to you.14 And if anyone

doesn't allow you into their home or their city, or if they reject what you say, shake the dust off your shoes as you leave.
15 Believe me--God will show more mercy to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah on Judgment Day than He will to *that* town!
16 I am sending you out as sheep marching toward waiting wolves, so use your heads and be wise as serpents, but also be gentle as doves.
17 Watch out for [unbelieving] men, for they will haul you before religious tribunals, and have you beaten in their synagogues.
18 You will also be brought in front of the governors and kings of the Jews and the Gentiles because of your commitment to me, and you will testify of me to them.
19 But when this happens, don't plan out your strategy for answering the charges that will be brought against you, for the words you will need to say will be provided to you at the right time.
20 They will come from the Spirit of your Father, and not from your own mind.
21 [Over me,] *brother will betray brother to death, father will betray child, and children will betray their parents and cause them to be put to death*.
22 Everyone will hate you because of who and what I am, and what I stand for--but he that endures to the end will be saved.
23 When they persecute you in one city, flee to another, for you will not have time to reach every city in Israel before the Son of Man arrives!
24 A student is not greater then his teacher, nor is a slave greater than his master.
25 It is enough that the student be like his master, and the slave like his lord. If they call the Master "Beelzebub," how much more will they denigrate those of his household in the same way?
26 But don't fear them [--since you will be vindicated, and they condemned, in the end: for the truth behind all men's deeds and motivations will be shown clearly for what they are].
27 What I tell you in secret, speak openly. What I whisper to you, shout from the housetops.
28 Don't fear those who can only kill your body, but not your soul--fear only God, who can destroy body *and* soul in hell!
29 Aren't a couple of sparrows sold for pocket change? But none of them falls from the sky and dies without the knowledge and will of your Father.
30 God knows *you* so well that He can even tell you how many hairs are on your head.
31 So don't worry, for you mean more to God than many sparrows.
32 If someone admits he is one of mine before men, I will admit he is one of mine to my Father in heaven.
33 But if someone denies he is one of mine to men, I will deny he is one of mine to my Father in heaven.
34 Don't assume I'm here to bring forth the universal peace to the earth you've been taught the Messianic Age will see. [For now,] I am not here to bring peace, but to wield a sword!
35 For I am come to *set a son against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a wife against her husband's mother.*
36 Because of me, a man's greatest enemies will live in his own house with him!
37 But he who loves his father or mother, or son or daughter more than me is unworthy of me.
38 And whoever does not take up his cross and follow me [--enduring the persecution of standing for me--] is unworthy of me.
39 He who compromises, and finds some way to save his life, shall in the end lose it. And he who gives his life up for me shall find true life.
40 Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me; and if he welcomes me he welcomes Him who sent me.
41 He who welcomes a prophet because of what he is receives the same reward as the prophet he honors. He who shows hospitality to a righteous man gains the reward of a righteous man.
42 Any disciple who does so little as give a cup of cold water to one of the least of my followers shall in no way lose his reward.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 11

1 Having commissioned his twelve disciples, Jesus departed to teach and preach in their various Galilean cities.
2 Meanwhile John, who was locked up in prison, heard about the things the Messiah was doing [along with his teachings against violence], and so he sent two of his disciples.
3 They said to Jesus: John asks whether you are the One who is supposed to come, or should we look for someone else?
4 Jesus answered in reply: Go and tell John what you've heard and seen:
5 That the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them.
7 As they left, Jesus began to say to the multitudes about John: What did you expect when you went into the wilderness to see John? [Someone whose word would change with the shifting winds of popular opinion like a reed shaking back and forth in the wind?]
8 Or some man dressed in expensive, comfortable attire? No--people who dress like nobles live in kings' castles.
9 But what was it that you went out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you--and much more than a prophet!
10 For John was the one Malachi foretold of when he wrote: **Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee**.
11 I tell you truly, of all the children ever born to women, there has never been a more important one than John the Baptist. Even so, the lowest-ranking person in the Messianic Kingdom is greater than he is [--and this is how much greater the covenant about to be instituted is than even the covenant under which John functions].
12 [And from the time of John's appearance to now, Satan has done all he can to keep the Messianic Kingdom from taking root, but it has forcefully sprouted just the same.]
13 For all the prophets and the Law of Moses pointed to and foretold the day John would arrive and herald the Kingdom.
14 And if you can accept it, John is Elijah, who was expected to appear before the Messiah himself.
15 If you can understand what I am saying, good!
16 Yet to what can I liken those of this generation who have heard the Message? They are like childish brats in the marketplace, whining out to each other:
17 "You didn't dance to our wedding march, so we played a funeral dirge, and you wouldn't mourn in response to that either. [What's *your* problem?]"
18 For John was [a Nazirite,] living a Spartan existence and avoiding food and wine, and they said, "He is [insane]!"
19 But then the Son of Man came, eating and drinking, and yet they complain, "He is a gluttonous drunkard who wants to get in good with tax collectors and sinners!" [As wise people show what they are by what they say and do, so witless people do likewise!]
20 Then he began to criticize the cities where he had done most of his miraculous deeds, because they would not repent:
21 Woe to you Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would long ago have repented to a man in goatskin and ashes [and their cities would have been spared].
22 I say to you that the sinners of Tyre and Sidon will see less punishment than *you* will at the Day of Judgment!

23 And you, Capernaum--will you be exalted up to heaven? No, you will be brought down to hell, because if the same things had been done in Sodom it would be standing to this day!
24 I promise you that the land of Sodom will get off easier than *you* will on the Day of Judgment!
25 At that time Jesus prayed, saying: I thank you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you hid these truths from the intellectuals and the clever, revealing them instead to the simple.
26 Yes, Father, for it seemed good in Your sight to do so.
27 The Father has given me [all power and authority], but none of you really knows who or what the Son is, but the Father does. And none of you knows who or what the Father is but the Son, and whoever else the Son chooses to reveal Him to.
28 Come to me, all you who work and are wearied--and I will give you rest.
29 Otherwise, how can someone go into the house of a strong man and rob his goods unless he first overpowers and ties the man up, leaving him free to strip the house clean?
30 Because my burden is not one where *you* do the work; *I* am the one who shoulders the burden for you, and thus my yoke is a pleasure to bear!

MATTHEW CHAPTER 12

1 Shortly thereafter, Jesus and his disciples happened to pass through a wheat field on a day that happened to be a Sabbath [for the Feast of Unleavened Bread]. The disciples being hungry, they [--but not Jesus--] began to pick some kernels of wheat to snack on.
2 When some Pharisees saw this, they accosted Jesus, and said: Look there--your disciples are violating the Sabbath by harvesting grain!
3 But Jesus answered: Did you never read what David did when he and his men were running from King Saul and were hungry?
4 How he entered into the Tent Tabernacle and ate the *shewbread*, which was unlawful for him and his men to eat, but was supposed to be for the priests only? [And was God mad at that?]
5 Or have you not read in the Torah how the priests in the Temple must work on the Sabbath, attending to their duties, but yet are blameless for that?
6 But I say to you that someone greater than even the Temple is here before you.
7 And again, if you understood the verse--*I desire mercy, not sacrifice*--you would not have criticized those who have not done wrong in God's eyes.
8 For the Son of Man is even Lord of the Sabbath [and can authoritatively declare what is and is not permissible on that day].
9 Now after leaving, he entered into a synagogue under control of these [Shammaiite] Pharisees.
10 A man was present who had a deformed hand, and the Pharisees asked Jesus: Is it Lawful to heal non-life-threatening disease on the days of Rest? They hoped to have something to use against him if he answered yes.
11 But Jesus replied: Which among you, if he has a sheep fall into a pit on the Sabbath, won't break the Sabbath by lifting it out [even though lifting or carrying a burden is a violation of the Sabbath laws]?
12 How much more precious is a human than a sheep? Thus, it follows that to do a good deed on the Sabbath [--like healing--] does not violate it.
13 Then he said to the man: Stretch out your hand! The man did, and it was restored whole, just like the other one.
14 [Enraged at this,] the Pharisees then went out and held a meeting, debating how to destroy Jesus.
15 But when word reached Jesus about it, he left the area and the multitudes went with him--and he healed them all.
16 He told them, however, not to spread word of what he was doing.
17 This was to fulfill a prophecy of Isaiah's:
18 **Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles.**
19 **He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets.**
20 **A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.**
21 **And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.**
22 Then a man who had been struck dumb and blind by a demon was brought to him, and Jesus healed this mute blind man to the extent that he could speak and see!
23 And all the people were amazed, and said: Is this not the *Messiah ben David*?!
24 But when the Pharisees heard this, they responded: This man casts out demons only because Beelzebub, the Prince of demons, is enabling him to!
25 But Jesus knew what they were thinking, and said to them: Every nation divided by civil war and infighting will fall. Every city or family divided against itself will not stand.
26 If Satan is casting his own demons out, then he is at war with his own forces, so how can his kingdom possibly survive?
27 And if *my* power comes from Beelzebub, where does *your* [Pharisee movement's] power come from? [In other words, when is the last time any of *you* cast out a demon by God's power? The answer is, of course, that you *can't* cast demons out at all!] So these fleeing demons are showing who really is, and is not, of God!
28 And if I therefore am casting out demons by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God is apparently before you right now.
29 Otherwise, how can someone go into the house of a strong man and rob his goods unless he first overpowers and ties the man up, leaving him free to strip the place clean?
30 Anyone who is not with me is against me; and he who does not gather with me is helping to scatter the harvest.
31 Because of this [--because you are either helping or opposing me--] I say to you that God will forgive all sorts of sin and blasphemous words. But to [knowingly denounce the redeeming power of God as Satanic] will not be forgiven men!
32 And whoever curses or speaks out against the Son of Man--it will be forgiven him. But whoever curses and opposes God's Spirit shall not find forgiveness in this Age or the next!
33 Either make the tree of your heart good, and its fruit good; or make the tree of your heart evil and its fruit evil, for the tree is revealed by its fruit.
34 O you generation of snakes! How can anyone ever hope to hear anything edifying come out of you and your movement? The mouth speaks what is in the heart [and all you have in your hearts is venom]!
35 A good man with a good heart brings forth good things, just as an evil man with an evil heart brings forth evil things as the fruit of what lives inside of him.
36 I want you to know that at the Last Judgment a man will give account for every offhand word he ever spoke.
37 For your words either will justify or condemn you!
38 Then some other Torah teachers and [Hillelite] Pharisees spoke up in response, saying: Teacher, we would see a sign from you [proving that you really speak for God].
39 But he answered them: An evil and spiritually-defiled generation wants a sign, and the only sign it will get is that of the prophet Jonah.

40 For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the fish's belly [and then came out], the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth [and will then come out].
41 The [Gentile] men of Nineveh will rise at the resurrection and condemn this generation, for *they* all repented at Jonah's preaching--and one greater than Jonah stands before you now!
42 The Queen of Sheba [--a Gentile--] shall rise up at the Last Judgment and condemn this generation, because she traveled all the way from Ethiopia to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and yet one greater than Solomon is here before you.
43 [Learn a lesson from demons!] When a demon is gone from a man, it wanders the deserts, hoping to find some place of rest. But finding none,
44 He says to himself, "I'll go back to the one I left!" So he returns and finds the man he once possessed cleansed from his presence.
45 Then the demon goes and finds seven demons even more wicked than himself to come and possess the man, bringing him under their total domination and making him worse off than he ever was before! I therefore warn you that this wicked generation shall be just as controlled by Satan!
46 While Jesus was talking to the people like this, his mother and brethren were outside trying to get near enough to speak to him.
47 Someone told Jesus: Your mother and brethren are outside, and want to speak to you.
48 But Jesus answered the man who told him: Who is my mother and brethren?
49 Then he gestured toward his disciples, and said: Here is my mother and brethren!
50 For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, my sister, and my mother!

MATTHEW CHAPTER 13

1 The same day, Jesus left the house he was staying at and sat down by the shore of the Sea of Galilee.
2 Hosts of people crowded around him, and he had to sit in a boat and speak from a few yards out in the water as the crowd stood on the shore.
3 Much of his teaching was in telling stories with a moral, such as this one: A farmer went out to sow some seed in a field.
4 As he cast it forth, some seeds fell outside the tilled ground and the birds ate the seeds up.
5 Some fell on rocky ground, and they did initially grow, but they had no deep roots because of the shallow soil.
6 When the sun got hot they withered up because their roots were so shallow.
7 Other seeds fell into thorny weeds and were choked by thorn bushes.
8 But some seeds fell into the tilled soil, grew, and eventually gave good fruit. Some had bountiful fruit; some had a lot of fruit; and some had a little fruit.
9 He who is able to understand, let him understand.
10 Later, the disciples came and asked him: Why do you talk to the people in stories [instead of just speaking plainly]?
11 He answered back: Because *you* are the ones who have been appointed to hear and understand the mysteries of the Messianic Kingdom in a clear, unambiguous manner. The crowds haven't been given this privilege.
12 [For whoever *is* able to understand will see his enlightenment continue to grow, while anyone who does *not* understand will lose what little understanding he may already have.]
13 Thus, I speak to the crowds in stories [to illustrate that their stubbornness and spiritual blindness makes them unable to understand my words].
14 In these people is fulfilled what Isaiah prophesied about when he said: **By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:**
15 **For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.**
16 But blessed are *your* eyes, for they can see, and blessed are *your* ears, for they can hear.
17 For truly I tell you that many prophets and righteous men of history looked for the day when the things you see and hear would arrive, but they died without seeing it.
18 So now I will tell you what this parable of the Sower meant:
19 When anyone hears the Message of the Kingdom, but does not understand it, [the devil] comes and takes away the seed of truth that started to grow in his heart. This represents the seeds that fell on the hard ground instead of the tilled soil.
20 The seed that fell onto rocky ground represents people who initially hear the Gospel and enthusiastically respond to it,
21 But they have no strong commitment, and when trials or persecution arise in opposition to the Message they quickly fall away.
22 The seed that fell into the thorn bushes are those who hear the Gospel but still make wealth and having a good life their priority, and thus they never grow any spiritual fruit in their lives because the Message is choked off by their greed.
23 The seeds that fell into the tilled soil represent people who hear and understand the Gospel, making a commitment to it. People like this always bear spiritual fruit, whether bountiful, a lot, or a little.
24 Jesus then spoke a similar parable: The Kingdom of heaven can be likened to a man who sowed good wheat seed in a field.
25 But while everyone was asleep one night, his enemy secretly came and sowed darnel [--which looks like wheat--] in the same field, then went on his way.
26 When the wheat grew and bore fruit, the darnel did likewise.
27 So the field hands came to their master, and said, "Sir, didn't you sow wheat in this field? Where did the darnel come from?"
28 He replied, "An enemy must have done this [trying to spoil the harvest]." The servants then asked, "Do you want us to go pluck up the weeds?"
29 But he said, "No--lest you pull up some of the wheat along with the weeds.
30 "Let both grow together until harvest time, then I'll tell the reapers to pull the bad plants up and tie them into bundles to be burned up. The wheat can then be gathered and stored in the granary."
31 Jesus spoke another parable: The Kingdom of heaven is likened to a single mustard seed that a man sowed in his field.
32 Even though a mustard seed is one of the smallest of all seeds, it is one of the largest herb plants, and when mature becomes a tree that birds may nest in.
33 This was yet another parable: The Kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman mixed into three cups of flour [until the dough grew so large it practically overflowed the bowl]!
34 All these points of spiritual truth Jesus imparted to the crowds in parables, and without using parables he did not speak.
35 So that it fulfilled what the prophet said in the Psalms: **I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.**
36 Then Jesus dismissed the crowds and went back into the house. The disciples then came to him, saying: Explain to us the story about the darnel in the wheat field.

37 He answered them: The man who sowed the good seed of wheat in the field represents me, the Son of Man.
38 The field itself is the world, and the good seed the children of God's Kingdom. The darnel are the children of [Satan, masquerading as true wheat].
39 The enemy that sowed the darnel is the devil. The harvest spoken of is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels.
40 As in real life darnel is bundled up and cast into the fire, so it will be at the end of this world.
41 The Son of Man will send forth his angels to remove everything in his Kingdom that causes men to stumble, and all those who live in unrepentant sin,
42 And they shall be cast into the furnace of hell's fire, where there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.
43 After that, the righteous shall shine as bright as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father. If anyone can understand--then understand!
44 Again, the Kingdom of heaven is also like a pot of gold buried in a field that a man happened to stumble upon. Elated, he reburied the gold and sold everything he owned to buy the field and keep the treasure.
45 It's also like a jeweler who sought quality pearls,
46 Who--when he found a flawless pearl of utter perfection--sold everything he had to acquire it.
47 The Kingdom of heaven is also like a net that was cast into the ocean, and gathered up a wide variety of fish.
48 When it was full, they drew the net to shore and began sorting the catch, tossing the good fish into baskets while throwing the bad fish away.
49 It will be likewise at the end of the world: The angels shall come out and separate the bad men from the good,
50 And will cast the bad into the furnace of hell's fire, where there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.
51 Jesus asked: Have you understood what I have been teaching in all this? The disciples answered: Yes, we have, Lord.
52 Jesus said: Every Torah teacher who adds my teachings to the knowledge he already has about God's Kingdom is like a man with a warehouse in which are stored precious commodities both old *and* new.
53 After Jesus had finished these parables, he left the area.
54 When he returned to Nazareth, he taught at the synagogue and everyone was astounded, asking: Where did this man get all this ability to preach? And what about these miracles they say he does?
55 Isn't he the same Jesus whose father was a carpenter [or stone mason]? Isn't his mother named Miriam, and doesn't he have kinsmen here--James, Joses, Simon, and Jude?
56 Don't his sisters live hereabouts? So how did he gain such knowledge, ability, and notoriety?
57 And they were offended [at his presumption to speak with such apparent authority]. Jesus noted: A prophet is honored everywhere but in his own town amongst his own acquaintances and family.
58. And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 14

1 It was about this time that Herod Antipas heard the commotion about Jesus,
2 And he said to his staff: This must be John the Baptist risen from the dead, and that's why such miracles are coming forth from him!
3 For Herod had chained and imprisoned John earlier because the Baptist had denounced him for marrying Herodias, his brother Philip's wife [after the woman used Roman law to divorce her husband].
4 John pointed out: The Law of Moses does not permit a man to marry a woman who divorces her husband through Gentile law!
5 Though Herod would have silenced John for good, he was afraid of sparking a revolution because the multitude revered the Baptist as a prophet.
6 But when Herod was celebrating his birthday, Salome, the daughter of his wife Herodias [and Salome's uncle Boethus/Philip] did an erotic dance that pleased Herod,
7 Who blurted out a vow that he would give her anything she asked for.
8 Having been instructed earlier on what to say by her mother, she told Herod: Give me John the Baptizer's head on a platter!
9 Herod was immediately sorry for his blunder, but to keep from losing face before his court as they dined with him, he did as she asked, and commanded John's head be brought and given to the girl.
10 So he had John's head cut off down in the dungeon.
11 His head was brought to court on a platter and given to the adolescent girl, who passed it on to her mother.
12 John's disciples came for his body and then buried it. Afterward, they came, and told Jesus what had happened.
13 When Jesus heard that John was dead, he took a boat to an isolated spot, but the people heard about it and left the cities to walk to where he was.
14 Going forth, Jesus saw the host of desperate people, and compassionately healed their sick.
15 As the sun was going down, the disciples came to him, and said: It's getting late and this is a wilderness. Dismiss the crowd so they can go to the local villages and buy food.
16 But Jesus replied: They need not leave--*you* feed them!
17 They said back: But we have only five barley loaves, and a couple of fish!
18 Jesus said: Bring them over to me.
19 Then Jesus had the crowd sit in the field, and he took up the five loaves and two fish. Looking up to heaven, he then blessed God and broke the loaves up, distributing the pieces to the disciples who, in turn, handed them out to the people.
20 There was enough for all, and everyone ate until they were full. The leftovers even filled twelve baskets!
21 The crowd numbered five thousand men, not counting women and children!
22 Just after this, Jesus had the disciples depart by boat while he sent the crowds away.
23 After dismissing the crowds, Jesus went up alone onto a mountain to pray for part of the night.
24 But a storm was arising and the boat with the disciples was having a hard time on the Sea of Galilee, for the wind was against them.
25 Around 3 AM, Jesus came out to the boat, walking upon the water!
26 When the disciples saw this, they panicked and screamed out in fear: It's a ghost!
27 But Jesus immediately shouted to them: Don't worry--it's me, so don't be afraid!
28 Peter shouted back: Lord, if it's *really* you, bid me to come walk out on the water to you!
29 Jesus said: Come on then! So Peter swung his legs over the side of the boat and began to walk out to Jesus.
30 But when he saw how powerful the shrieking wind was, it caused him to become afraid, he started to sink down into the waves and cried out: Lord, save me!
31 Instantly, Jesus came and pulled him back up, saying: O you man of little faith! Why did you stop believing, and let doubt defeat you?
32 When they got back to the ship, the wind ceased.

33 Then those aboard the ship did obeisance, and said: Of a truth, you *are* [the Messiah and king of Israel]!
34 When they reached shore, they were again in the land of Gennesaret.
35 This time, when people thereabouts found out, everyone brought the sick and diseased.
36 And these came, wanting just to touch the tassels of his prayer shawl, and everyone who did that was completely healed and restored to vigor.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 15

1 Then some Pharisees and Torah teachers from Jerusalem [--who followed the teachings and traditions of Shammai--] came up to Jesus, saying:
2 Why do your disciples transgress rabbinic tradition by not performing the ceremonial hand washing before they eat bread?!
3 But Jesus shot back: Why do you transgress the commandments of God with your rabbinic tradition?
4 For God commanded: *See to the needs of your father and mother*; and, *Anyone who curses his father or mother must be stoned*.
5 But your oral rulings on the Law say: *If a man donates his money and goods to the Temple [remaining only an overseer of them],*
6 *He is absolved from the responsibility of using his resources to aid his parents if they need it.* Thus, the commandment [--which is far more important than your traditions--] is nullified.
7 You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying:
8 **This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.**
9 **But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.**
10 Jesus then called the multitude, and said: Listen and understand!
11 [It's not things like eating food that isn't prepared according to strict rabbinic requirements, or eating without first saying this prayer or that, which *really* defile a person!] What defiles a person is what comes *out* of him, not what goes *into* him!
12 Then the disciples came up, and said: Don't you realize the Pharisees were offended when they heard you say those things?
13 But Jesus answered: Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be plucked up by the roots!
14 Let those Pharisees be--they are blind leaders leading blind followers, and when the blind lead the blind they both fall into a ditch.
15 Then Peter spoke to Jesus, saying: Tell us what you meant by what really defiles a person.
16 Jesus replied: Do you all still lack understanding?
17 Do you not comprehend by now that anything you eat passes through your body and eventually goes out into the sewer?
18 But the words that come out of a man are from what lives in his heart--and it's the *words* someone speaks that can make a man impure in God's eyes.
19 For it's from the heart that evil thoughts, murder, sexual sin, thievery, lies, and blasphemous speech come--
20 And these are what really make a man impure. But to eat without saying a blessing and performing a ritual hand washing does not make a man impure.
21 Then Jesus departed into the area of Tyre and Sidon.
22 There, a Canaanite woman followed after Jesus, crying out: Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! A demon has grievously vexed my little girl!
23 Jesus ignored her, but eventually the disciples became irritated with her and urged Jesus, saying: Tell her to get lost--she's driving us crazy by following along, begging us!
24 So Jesus answered the woman, and said: I have been sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel [and not to the Gentiles].
25 Then the woman fell down in obeisance at Jesus' feet, and begged: Lord, help me!
26 But Jesus answered: It is not appropriate to take the children's food and toss it to the puppies to eat.
27 She said in response: That may be true, Lord--but even the puppies are fed a few scraps from their master's table!
28 Then Jesus answered: O woman, you have great faith! Let your request be granted. And the woman's daughter was made whole from that very hour.
29 Jesus then left the area and returned to the Sea of Galilee where he selected a mountain to sit at.
30 Great multitudes of people came to him with the lame, the blind, the mute, the maimed, and many others that they laid at Jesus' feet; and he healed them.
31 He healed so many that the multitudes were amazed at seeing mute people speak, maimed people with their limbs back, lame people walking, and blind people recovering their sight. And they glorified the God of Israel.
32 Then Jesus called his disciples to him, and told them: I am worried for the people because they have been with me for three days without food. I don't want to send them away hungry, lest they get sick on the way home.
33 The disciples answered: Where would we get enough bread out here in the wilderness to feed so many?
34 Jesus asked: How many loaves have you? They answered: Seven, and some small fish.
35 So Jesus commanded the people to sit down.
36 Then he took the loaves and fish, blessed God, then handed them out to the disciples who took the food to the people.
37 And everyone ate until they were full, and they had seven basketfuls left over!
38 *This* crowd consisted of four thousand men, not counting women and children!
39 After Jesus sent the crowds away, he got in a boat and went to [the notorious city of] Magdala, and the region around it.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 16

1 The Pharisees, now joined by some Sadducee priests from the Temple, approached Jesus, challenging him to show a sign from heaven [to prove his legitimacy].
2 He answered them: If the sky at sundown is red, you say there will be good weather the next morning.
3 If it's red and overcast at dawn, you say the weather will be bad. You hypocrites! You can read the signs in the sky to know what is in store, but are you so utterly incapable of understanding the signs of the *times* you're in?
4 A perverted and spiritually-defiled generation wants a sign. Well, the only sign you will get is the sign of the prophet Jonah! Having spoken, Jesus then got in a boat, and departed.
5 When they reached the other side of the lake the disciples realized they had forgotten to bring bread with them.
6 Then Jesus noted: Watch out! Beware of bread yeasted by either the Pharisees or the Sadducees!
7 The disciples didn't understand, and assumed Jesus was making some comment about bread *baked* by Pharisees or Sadducees, so they muttered among themselves: He said that because we forgot to bring bread with us.
8 When Jesus realized that, he told them: O you men of little faith--why are you muttering among yourselves like I'm talking about food?

9 Do you not understand and recall how I fed five thousand people with five loaves, and how many baskets of leftovers you collected afterwards?
10 Did you forget the seven loaves that fed four thousand, and how many baskets you collected from *that*?
11 How then can you think I'm referring to baked bread when I warn you about the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees?
12 Then they understood that Jesus was not warning about normal bread yeast, but the spiritual yeast of the doctrines both these groups held.
13 Later, when Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked the disciples: Who are the people saying that I, the Son of Man, am?
14 They responded: Some think you're John the Baptist; others think you must be Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the other ancient prophets returned to the earth.
15 He said to them: But what do *you* say about who I am?
16 Shimon Peter spoke up, saying: You are the Messiah--Son of the living God!
17 Jesus answered Peter: Blessed are you, Shimon, son of Jonah, for no one told you this, nor did you figure it out on your own--but my Father in heaven gave you this revelation!
18 And I also say to you, that you are Peter [--a rock--] and upon this rock I will erect my church, and the gates of death [will neither stop me, nor will they overcome the church I build]!
19 And I will give to you first [--not to the Pharisees or Sadducees--] the keys of authority over the Messianic Kingdom in matters of church discipline and doctrine. Whatever *you* permit shall be permitted, and whatever *you* deny shall be denied.
20 Then he charged the disciples to tell no one he was affirming that he was Jesus the Messiah.
21 From that point, Jesus now began warning the disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer badly at the hands of the religious leaders, the chief priests, and the Torah teachers--and that he would die, rising again on the third day.
22 Then Peter took him aside and began sharply rebuking him, saying: God forbid, Lord--this will not happen to you!
23 But he turned his back to Peter and said: Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle to me because you are not thinking God's way, but man's!
24 Then Jesus said to his disciples: If any man wants to be my follower, let him deny his own wants and wishes and take up the cross of following mine.
25 For whoever saves his life will lose it in the end, and whoever loses his life for my sake shall find it in the end.
26 For what is the good of gaining everything on earth only to lose your soul in hell? Or, what price can a man put on his immortal soul?
27 For the Son of Man will come in the glory of his Father and His angels; and he will give every man what is coming to him, be it reward or punishment, **according to his works**.
28 And truly I say to you that there are some here who will not die until they glimpse the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom!

MATTHEW CHAPTER 17

1 Six days later, Jesus took Peter, James, and his brother John apart from the other disciples to a high mountain.
2 Then Jesus was transfigured before their eyes, his face shining like the sun and his clothing like pure white light!
3 Moses and Elijah then appeared and began speaking with him.
4 Peter cried out to Jesus: Lord, it is good for us to be here! If you want us to, let us go build three shelters--one for you, Moses, and Elijah--to stay in!
5 While he was speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them and a voice spoke out of it that said: This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased. All of you heed what he says!
6 At hearing the voice, the disciples fell face down on the ground, cringing in terror.
7 Then Jesus came over and touched them, saying: Get up, and don't be afraid.
8 When they looked up, the vision was gone and they saw only Jesus.
9 As they descended the mountain, Jesus commanded: Don't tell anyone about this vision until the Son of Man is risen from the dead.
10 His disciples asked him: Why then do the Torah teachers say Elijah must come back to earth [before the Messiah appears and sets up the Kingdom]?
11 Jesus answered: Elijah will indeed come and restore all things [to set the stage for this].
12 But I point out that he already came but they didn't realize it, and did to him as they wished. Likewise, the Son of Man will suffer at their hands.
13 Then the disciples realized he was speaking of John the Baptist.
14 When they returned to the waiting multitudes, a certain man came and knelt down to him, saying:
15 Lord, have mercy on my son. He is vexed [with epileptic fits], often falling down onto the fire or into the water.
16 I brought him to your disciples but they couldn't cure him.
17 Then Jesus answered, and said: O faithless and perverse generation--how long do you think I will be here with you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring the boy over to me!
18 Jesus then rebuked the demon, which left, and the child was cured right then!
19 Later, the disciples came to Jesus without the crowds, and asked: Why couldn't *we* cast it out?
20 Jesus replied: Because you didn't have faith. I tell you truly, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you could even say to this mountain here, "Up and go elsewhere," and it would do as you say, for nothing is impossible to those with faith.
21 Even so, this demon is the sort that will not go unless the one casting him out has been spending time in intense prayer [and fasting].
22 Now while they were staying in the region of Galilee, Jesus told them: The Son of Man will be betrayed into the hands of men.
23 They shall kill him, and on the third day he will be raised up again. Hearing this, the disciples were very grieved at these words.
24 When they reached Capernaum, representatives of the Temple, who collected the yearly head tax, came to Peter, and said: Doesn't your teacher pay the tax?
25 Peter said: Yes, he does. Now when he was coming into the house, Jesus stopped him, saying: What do you think, Shimon? Whom do the kings of the earth collect taxes from--their own children, or strangers?
26 Peter answered: From strangers! So Jesus said: Then the children are the ones who are free from debt!
27 But so that we don't offend them, go out to the lake and cast out a hook, and the first fish you catch will have a coin in its mouth. Use it to pay our tax to them.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 18

1 While they were there in Galilee, the disciples asked Jesus: Who [of us] is the most important in the Kingdom of heaven?
2 In response, Jesus called a small child to him and set him in their midst.

3 He said: I assure you that if you do not change your way of thinking, and become like little children [--who could care less about such things--] you won't even enter the Kingdom of heaven!
4 Whoever humbles himself like this small child is truly the greatest person in the Kingdom of heaven.
5 And anyone who receives one such child as my representative is receiving me as well.
6 But whoever causes a child who believes in me to stumble would be luckier to have an [anchor] tied to his neck, and to be thrown into the sea to drown.
7 Woe to world because of its offenses. Life is full of trials and temptations, but the one who is the cause of it will pay!
8 So again: If your hand or foot causes you to stumble into sin, cut them off and throw them away, for it is better to enter into life crippled or maimed than to be cast into eternal hellfire with all your limbs.
9 Likewise, if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away, for it is better to enter into life with one eye than to be cast into eternal hellfire with two eyes.
10 Take heed that you don't scorn children [--as is common in our society, including new converts who are also called "children"--] for I assure you that their guardian angels always have access to my Father in heaven [and may bring charge against you for this].
11 You see, the Son of Man came to save those who are lost.
12 What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep and one wanders off, doesn't he leave the ninety-nine others who are fine, and head into the mountains to find the stray?
13 And if he does find it, he rejoices more over it than he does over the ninety-nine that did not go astray.
14 Even so, it is the will of your Father in heaven that not one of these children perish.
15 Moreover, if your brother commits wrong against you, speak to him alone about it. If he hears you, you are reconciled.
16 But if he rejects you, take one or two others with you [since the Torah says that two or three witnesses are accepted to establish a fact in court].
17 If he ignores them too, bring your case before the church, and if the church agrees with you and he still refuses to repent--treat him like a pagan or a tax collector!
18 Truly I say that you [have the right to make binding decisions regarding matters of the church].
19 Again, if two of you on earth agree on something, your request shall be granted by my Father in heaven.
20 [For where two or three of my representatives meet, regarding an issue, my authority is there with them.]
21 Then Peter came to him and asked: Lord, just how many times must I forgive my brother? Is seven times enough?
22 Jesus answered: You should forgive not just *seven* times, but *seventy* times seven times!
23 I say that because the Messianic Kingdom can be likened to a king who called some of his servants to account for money they owed him.
24 When he started the accounting, a man was brought forth who owed him a million dollars.
25 But since the man was broke, the king ordered everything that man owned to be sold. Then he ordered the man and his family sold off as slaves.
26 Hearing this, the servant fell on his face pleading: "Lord--be merciful, and give me more time. I'll pay you all that I owe!"
27 The king was so moved with compassion that he unshackled him and forgave the debt altogether.
28 But that same servant went out and found another servant who owed *him* ten dollars, and he grabbed the man by the throat, saying, "Pay what you owe me!"
29 His fellow servant fell at his feet and cried out: "Have patience with me, and I'll pay you every cent!"
30 But the man wouldn't listen, and had his fellow servant tossed into Debtor's Prison, where he would stay until the debt was somehow paid off.
31 Other servants were very grieved at seeing this, and they went, and told the king what had happened.
32 Then the king called that man back, and said to him: "You evil servant! I had mercy on you and forgave the whole of your debt because you begged for mercy!
33 "Shouldn't you have had the same compassion on the man who owed you money as I had for you?!"
34 So the king angrily handed the man over to be tortured until such time as he could find some way to pay off the million dollars that he owed [from behind bars].
35 So will my heavenly Father do to you if you do not fully and sincerely forgive every brother who sins against you.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 19

1 Now after Jesus had finished these teachings he left Galilee and headed into northern Judea beyond Jordan [where he made camp].
2 Hosts of people followed, and he healed them there.
3 Some Pharisees [who followed Hillel's teachings on divorce] also came and challenged him on the subject, asking: Do you agree that the Law of Moses permits an easy divorce if a man believes he has a good reason?
4 Jesus answered: Have you not read that God in the beginning made them male and female,
5 And said, *Because of this, a man shall leave his parents and cleave to his wife, and they two shall be one flesh*?
6 Thus, they are no longer two individuals, but one flesh in God's eyes. It is not for man, at his own whim, to thereafter break up a covenantal relationship recognized by God.
7 They answered: Well, then why did Moses allow a man to write up a Bill of Divorce, and put his wife away?
8 Jesus replied: Moses allowed you to divorce your wives because of your hard hearts [--but it was not in God's original plan].
9 So I want you to know that a man who divorces his wife for any reason other than for adultery--and then marries someone else--stands guilty of adultery; and the divorced woman will cause anyone she subsequently marries to be guilty of adultery as well.
10 The disciples concluded after hearing this: If that's how things are between a married couple, it's better to stay single!
11 But Jesus answered: [Not everyone is given the grace to be able to live a celibate lifestyle.]
12 For some are born to be celibate for physical reasons, some become eunuchs or are denied wives in order to serve a master, and some make the choice of celibacy to devote themselves wholly to God and the furtherance of His Kingdom. Whoever can live in that state should do so.
13 Then some mothers brought small children to him to lay hands on and pray over, but the disciples complained, and tried to stop it.
14 But Jesus said: Let the little children come, and don't stop them--for the Kingdom of heaven is made up of children!
15 So Jesus laid hands on them [and blessed them]. Then he departed.
16 At one point, someone came up, asking: Good Master, what good thing must I do to be absolutely sure of having eternal life?

17 Jesus replied: Why would you call any man "good"? Only God is good. But to answer your question, if you would enter into eternal life, keep the commandments.
18 The man then asked: Which commandments do I have to keep? Jesus replied: Don't murder; don't commit adultery; don't steal or kidnap for ransom; don't lie about others;
19 Honor and take care of your parents; and love your neighbor as you do yourself.
20 The young man said in response: I've done all these from my youth. What am I missing?
21 Jesus replied: Since you would be perfect, go and sell what you have and give it to the poor, storing up treasure in heaven; then come, and follow me.
22 But when the young man heard that, he was very disturbed and left in sorrow since he was extremely wealthy [and could not let go of his possessions].
23 Then Jesus told the disciples: I tell you truly that a rich man shall enter heaven only with great difficulty.
24 I say it again--it is easier for a rope to go through an eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God.
25 When the disciples heard that, they were dumbfounded [because the rich are thought by many to be favored by God], so they asked: Who can be saved then?
26 Jesus looked over, saying: With men, this is impossible--but with God all things are possible.
27 Then Peter spoke up, and said to him: Look at us--we've given up everything to follow you. What will be our reward?
28 Jesus answered: Truly I say that you who have followed me--when everything is re-created, and the Son of Man sits upon his throne of glory in the Messianic Kingdom--will sit on twelve thrones with me, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.
29 And everyone who has left houses, brothers, sisters, parents, children or lands for the sake of following me shall receive them back a hundredfold, *and* inherit everlasting life.
30 But many who are great and important in this life shall be insignificant in the next; and many who are insignificant in this life shall be great and important in the next.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 20

1 For the Messianic Kingdom is like a farmer who went out early one morning to hire grape-pickers for his vineyard.
2 He found some laborers, each of whom he promised to pay a silver penny for a day's work; and he sent them out into the vineyard.
3 About nine in the morning, the farmer saw others standing idle in the marketplace,
4 And he told them, "You also go work in my vineyard, and I'll pay you a fair wage." So off they went.
5 At noon and three o'clock, he did the same thing.
6 About five PM, he found some others standing around idle, and so he asked, "Why have you been standing around all day, doing nothing?"
7 They answered, "Because no one has hired us today." So the farmer told them, "You also head out into my vineyard, and I'll pay you a fair wage."
8 When the sun began to go down, the man said to his overseer, "Call in the pickers and pay them off, starting with those who have been here the least amount of time."
9 When the ones hired at five PM came up, they were paid a silver penny.
10 But when the first group came up for payment, they expected more, yet got the same silver piece for their work.
11 Then, when they were paid the same silver piece, they complained to the farmer,
12 Saying, "Look here--these men came along in the last hour, and didn't endure any of the heat like *we* did for you, yet you paid them the same wages as you did us?!"
13 But the farmer replied to one of them, "Friend, I didn't cheat you. Didn't you agree to work for a silver piece?
14 "Take your money, and go. I choose to pay the last group the same price I paid you.
15 "Aren't I allowed to do that with my own money? Why are you stingy with my money because you think me too generous?"
16 So the last will be first, and the first shall be last. For many are called, but few are chosen.
17 And Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples apart on the road, and spoke to them:
18 Look--we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be handed over to the chief priests and the Torah teachers, and they shall condemn him to death.
19 They will hand him over to the Gentiles to mock him, whip him, and crucify him--but on the third day he will rise again!
20 Then the mother of Zebedee's two sons, James and John, came up with them and knelt before Jesus, desiring a favor.
21 He said to her: What is it that you wish? She answered: Grant that my two sons will be the most important officials of your kingdom, sitting at your right and left hands!
22 But Jesus answered back: You two don't know what you're asking for! Are you able to drink the cup I must drink, and endure the baptism I must endure? The pair said: Yes, we can!
23 So Jesus answered: Well, you will indeed partake of my cup and my baptism. But to rule at my right and left hands is not mine to give. Those positions will go to those for whom my Father has prepared them.
24 When the ten others heard about this, they were furious at the two brothers.
25 But Jesus called them over, and said: Gentile rulers are the ones who lord it over people, and they who are important exercise authority over those under them.
26 But among you, that's not how it should be. Whoever wants to be important among you should do that by serving the others.
27 And whoever wants to be the greatest among you should do that by being the greatest servant,
28 Just as the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.
29 As they departed from Jericho, a great host of people followed along.
30 Now there were two men sitting by the road. When they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out: Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!
31 The crowds tried to hush them up, but they cried out all the louder: Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!
32 But Jesus halted and called them up, asking: What do you want me to do for you?
33 They answered: Lord, we want our sight restored!
34 So Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. When he did that, immediately they could see, and they followed him.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 21

1 Now when they neared Jerusalem and reached Bethphage, which is at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples,
2 Telling them: Go into that village there, and the first thing you'll see is an ass tied up with her foal. Untie them and bring them to me.
3 If anyone asks what you're doing, say, "The Lord has need of them, and will send them right back."
4 All this was done to fulfill a prophecy of Zechariah:

5 **Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.**
6 So the disciples went out and did as Jesus had ordered them.
7 They brought the ass and her foal, spread their cloaks upon them, then sat Jesus upon the donkey.
8 Many of the people strewed their garments before Jesus, while others cut and laid down tree branches.
9 And a huge multitude went before and followed behind, crying out: "Hosanna to the Son of David! *Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!*"
10 When Jesus entered the gates of Jerusalem, the whole city was intrigued, and asked: Who is this man?
11 The multitude shouted back: This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee!
12 Jesus, meanwhile, went into the Temple of God and drove out those who transacted business there. He also overturned the tables of the money-changers and the chairs of those who sold sacrificial doves.
13 He said to them: It is written, **My house shall be called the house of prayer**; but you
have made it a den of thieves!
14 The blind and crippled then came to him in
the Temple, and Jesus healed them.
15 But when the chief priests and Torah teachers saw the great miracles, and the children [who served the High Priest] crying out in the Temple courts, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were enraged.
16 And they said to Jesus: Do you hear what these are saying?! But Jesus said in response: Yes--and have you never read [in the Septuagint]: **Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise**?
17 Then he left them and departed the city for Bethany, where he spent the night.
18 The next morning, as he returned to the city, Jesus was hungry.
19 When he saw a good-looking fig tree near the road, he went over to it and found no fruit, but only leaves. So he cursed it, saying: Let no fruit ever grow on you again! And the tree immediately withered away.
20 When the disciples saw this, they were amazed, and said: How did the tree wither away so quickly?
21 Jesus answered, and said to them: I tell you truly, if you have faith, and do not give in to doubt, you can not only do what you have seen done to this fig tree, but you can also say to this mountain, "Get up, and be cast into the sea!" and it will be done.
22 And whatever you ask for in prayer, believing--you will receive!
23 When Jesus arrived at the Temple, the chief priests and the local religious authorities came up while he was teaching, and demanded to know: By what authority do you do these things, and who gave you this authority?!
24 Jesus replied: I'll ask you one thing, and if you can answer it, I will likewise answer by what authority *I* do these things:
25 John's baptism [and ministry]--was it from God, or was it his own invention? Having been asked this, the group reasoned how to answer, saying: If we say God gave it to him, he will ask, "Then why didn't you believe him?"
26 But if we say, "John made it up on his own," we'll have an angry mob upon us, for the people hold John to be a prophet.
27 So their answer was: We don't know. Thus, Jesus said back to them: Then I will not tell you by what authority *I* do these things!
28 But what do you think about *this*? A man had two sons, and he went to the first, and told him, "Son, go work in my vineyard today."
29 The son answered, "I will not." But after he thought about it, he changed his mind and did go.
30 The man said likewise to the second son who answered, "I will, Sir!" But he later changed his mind and did not go work.
31 Of the two, which did the will of his father? The group answered: The first. Jesus then said: I assure you that the tax collectors and prostitutes will go into the Kingdom of God before *you* will!
32 For John came, living and teaching the way of true righteousness, yet you did not believe him. But the tax collectors and prostitutes *did* believe him, and when you saw them repenting, you would not repent yourselves, and believe him.
33 Now listen to *this* parable: There was a certain farmer who planted a vineyard, made a fence around it, dug a winepress, set up a watchtower, and leased the vineyard out to sharecroppers while he left for a far-off country.
34 When the time to gather the proceeds arrived, he sent his representatives to the sharecroppers to collect his portion.
35 But the sharecroppers beat, murdered, and stoned his representatives.
36 He sent more representatives to them, and they did this again.
37 Finally, he sent his own son, saying to himself, "They will certainly honor my son!"
38 But when the sharecroppers saw the son, they said to themselves, "Here comes the heir to the estate--let's kill him, and then we'll take his inheritance for ourselves!"
39 So they grabbed hold of him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him.
40 When the owner of the vineyard comes himself, what will he do to the sharecroppers?
41 The leaders answered: He will utterly destroy those wicked men, and lease the vineyard to more trustworthy sharecroppers who will give the owner the fruits he has a right to expect when harvest time comes!
42 Jesus said in conclusion: Well, have you never read in the Scriptures: **The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes**?
43 Therefore, I tell you that the Kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a people who *will* bring forth the fruits of it.
44 And whoever falls on this stone shall be broken [and used in building], but whomever the rock falls upon will be ground into dust.
45 When the chief priests and Pharisees heard his parables, they realized Jesus was talking about *them*.
46 But when they debated taking him into custody, they feared the multitude because they believed him to be a prophet.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 22

1 Jesus continued talking in parables, saying:
2 The Kingdom of heaven is like a king who held a marriage for his son.
3 He sent forth his servants to call the invited guests to the feast, but they would not come.
4 So he sent more servants with the message to those invited: *I've prepared the banquet! The meat is cooked and ready. Come to the marriage banquet!*
5 But they didn't take it seriously, and went about their normal activities, one to his farm and another to his business.
6 The rest disrespected the king's servants, and killed them.
7 When word reached the king, he was so furious that he sent his armies to kill those murderers and burn their city to the ground.
8 He said to his servants: The wedding is ready, but those who were invited to it weren't worthy of the invitation!
9 So go out onto the roads and invite anyone you see to the marriage feast.

10 These servants did as they were told, and brought in as many people as they could find on the roads, bad people as well as good. And the wedding was full of guests.
11 But when the king arrived to see the guests, he spotted a man who did not have on a new robe [which was handed out freely to anyone who came in through the gate].
12 So the king said, "Friend, how did you get in here without the wedding garment [provided for you at the gate]?" But the man was speechless.
13 Then the king said to the servants: "Bind up this party-crasher hand and foot, and cast him forth into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth! [For he would have been welcome if he had come in through the same gate as everyone else, instead of sneaking in through some other way!]"
14 You see, many are invited, but few are sought out and personally escorted in.
15 Then the Pharisees held a meeting to discuss how to trap Jesus in his own words.
16 So they sent their own representatives, together with some from the Herodian party [who supported returning the Herods to full authority over Judea], and they said: Teacher, we know you are sincere, and always teach the way of God truthfully, since man's approval means nothing to you.
17 Give us your opinion on this issue: Is it within the Law of Moses that taxes should be paid to Caesar, or not?
18 But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said: Why do you try to trick me, you hypocrites?
19 Show me the money of the Roman tax! So they brought him a Roman coin.
20 He took it, and said: Whose image and name is on this coin?
21 They answered: Caesar's. So he said in response: Then give to Caesar what he has a right to expect, but give to God what *He* has a right to expect!
22 When they heard these words, they marveled and left him, going their own way.
23 The same day, some Sadducees, who deny there is [an immortal soul or] a resurrection of the body, came up and asked:
24 Teacher, Moses said that if a man dies childless, his brother must marry his wife, and provide him an heir so his bloodline doesn't die out.
25 Now we know of seven brothers, and the first--after marrying the woman he was betrothed to--died childless. So his oldest brother married her, but had no children either.
26 Then he died, and the next brother married her, and this pattern continued until all seven men died without the woman's ever having a child.
27 Finally, the woman died.
28 So at the resurrection of the dead, which of the seven will be her husband since they were all married to her?
29 Jesus answered: You're wrong from the beginning since you don't even know or understand the Scriptures *or* the power of God!
30 In the resurrection, people aren't married, nor are they given in marriage, but are like the angels of God in heaven.
31 But as touching whether there even is [an immortal spirit or] a resurrection of the dead, have you never read what God Himself spoke to you when He said:
32 **I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob**. God could not be the Lord of three dead men in the grave with no consciousness! [Those men *had* to be conscious for God to be their Lord, wherever they may have been, and so they will rise in resurrection!]
33 When the crowds heard this, they were amazed at Jesus' doctrine.
34 But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they huddled together,
35 And one of them, who was an expert in the whole of Mosaic Law, asked him a trick question:
36 Master, what is the most important commandment in the Law?
37 Jesus replied: **Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind**.
38 This is the first and most important commandment!
39 The second is just as critical: **Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself**.
40 On these two commandments [hang all the written and oral Law]!
41 While the Pharisees happened to be gathered together, Jesus asked them:
42 What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he? They said: David's, of course!
43 He said back: If that's true [in the way you think], why did David, under the inspiration of the Spirit, write in the psalms that the Messiah is his *Lord* [when a son is always in a lesser position than his father in our culture]?
44 For he wrote, **The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool**.
45 If David calls the Messiah his "Lord," how is the Messiah *his* son? 46 None of them could answer that, and from that day on, no one dared try to trick Jesus with questions.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 23

1 Jesus now spoke to both the crowd and his own disciples.
2 He said: The Torah teachers and the Pharisees have come to sit in Moses' throne of authority.
3 So you must do all that they require you to do. But don't do it with the same attitudes they have, for they talk a good talk, but they do not walk a good walk.
4 They lay hosts of their own tortuous commandments on the backs of the people to shoulder, and will not lift a finger to remove them.
5 But everything they do is done for them to look pious in the eyes of others. They wear big phylacteries on their heads, and fringes on their prayer shawls that reach down to their ankles.
6 They love to be invited to the best seats at banquets, and to have the choice seats in the synagogues.
7 They love men in the marketplace to greet them by calling them "Rabbi" or "Teacher."
8 But don't you take the title of *rabbi* to yourself [thinking to make followers of your own]. You have but one Lord and rabbi--me! And all of you are equally brothers in my sight.
9 And don't call any earthly man your "father" [in the sense that the Pharisees do teachers like Hillel and Shammai, or some do the High Priest]. Your one true Father is in heaven!
10 Nor should you consider yourselves to be masters, for the Christ is the only master.
11 But whoever would be the most important of you must be as the lowest slave.
12 And whoever will advance his own position and agenda within the community will be brought down, and the humble one shall instead be exalted.
13 But woe to you Torah teachers and Pharisees! You hypocrites do all you can to stop people from entering into the Kingdom of heaven that you, yourselves, reject!
14 Woe to you hypocritical Torah teachers and Pharisees! You throw penniless widows into the street, while you stand outside the door in the sight of others and pretend to pray like pious men! Thus, you will receive greater punishment in hell than most sinners!
15 Woe to you hypocrite Torah teachers and Pharisees for the fact that you'll travel over land and sea to make one convert to your

brand of Judaism, then turn him into twice the child of hell that *you* are!
16 Woe to you blind guides who absolve a man invoking the Temple as witness when he swears an oath--unless the oath is one pertaining to a [*monetary gift* to the Temple]!
17 Blind fools--what is greater? The Temple itself, or the gold housed inside of it that the Temple makes holy?
18 If a person swears by the altar, he can change his mind. Oh, but if he swears by a *gift* upon the altar [that is promised to the Temple], then he is bound!
19 Blind fools--what is more important? The gift? Or the altar that makes the gift holy?
20 Whoever swears by the altar, swears by its holiness and all it represents!
21 Whoever swears by the Temple, swears by its holiness and Him who dwells in it!
22 And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God, and God who sits on that throne.
23 Woe to you hypocrite Torah teachers and Pharisees! [You Shammaiites tithe to the last kernel of grain], but when it comes to what truly matters in the Law--justice, mercy, faithfulness--you act like you never heard of these! You should have done all with equal zeal!
24 But no--you are blind guides who make sure you strain out a tiny unclean gnat from the water you drink, while you gulp down an unclean camel without even noticing!
25 Woe to you hypocrite Torah teachers and Pharisees! You ritually wash the cup and the plate to make whatever is served upon them holy, but there is nothing but graft and self-indulgence within you, yourselves!
26 Blind [Shammaiite] Pharisee--worry about cleaning what's inside the cup and plate of your own soul, and then the outside will take care of itself!
27 Woe to you hypocritical Torah teachers and Pharisees! You are like painted tombs that look good on the outside, but inside are filled with dead bones that cause defilement and corruption to anyone they come into contact with!
28 In the same way, you look righteous on the outside, but inside you are filled with hypocrisy and unrepentant sin.
29 Woe to you hypocritical Torah teachers and Pharisees! You build monuments to the prophets and the righteous dead,
30 And say, "If we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we would never have joined in persecuting and slaying the prophets!"
31 So you admit you're descended from the murderers of the prophets!
32 Walk in their footsteps, and show the ultimate fruit of what your fathers were then!
33 You snakes! You generation of vipers! What hope is there for you to escape damnation in hell?
34 I'll send prophets, wise men, and teachers to you. Some you'll murder or crucify, and some you'll lash in the synagogues, drive out, and persecute from city to city.
35 Upon your heads, therefore, will come the final responsibility for the blood of every righteous man ever slain, from Abel [in the first scroll of the Scriptures], to Zechariah ben Berechiah [in the last scroll of the Scriptures] who was slain between the Temple and the altar!
36 I tell you truly that the punishment for all this will fall on the heads of this generation!
37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem--the city that kills the prophets and stones all who are sent to you--how often would I have gathered your children together like a hen gathers her chicks under her wing, but you refused!
38 Look now--your Temple is left desolate to you!
39 For I say that you will not see me [--your Messiah--] again until you say [of me,] "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord"!

MATTHEW CHAPTER 24

1 Jesus left the Temple court, and the disciples directed his attention to some of the magnificent structures of the Temple complex.
2 But Jesus said in response: You see all these things? Truly I say to you, there won't be so little as two stones left cemented together of these buildings--they'll all be thrown down in rubble!
3 Later, as Jesus sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him without the crowds and asked: Tell us--when will the Temple be thrown down? And what will the sign be of your ushering in the Kingdom, and the end of this age [before the Messianic Age begins]?
4 Jesus replied: Don't let anyone trick you!
5 Many false messiahs will come, claiming to *be* the Messiah, and hosts will be deceived by them.
6 And you will hear about wars and rumors of war coming. Don't worry, for these things must happen, but that will not signal the end yet.
7 For race will rise up against race, and nation against nation; and there will be famines, pestilence, and earthquakes in different places.
8 These are only the start of the *Birthpangs of the Messiah*.
9 Then you will be delivered over to torture and death because of your testimony for me. All nations will hate you because of who and what I am.
10 And many shall [lose their faith and] stumble, betraying each other and hating each other.
11 And many false teachers will arise, deceiving hosts of people.
12 And because of all the sin on the earth, people's love [and fear of God] will wane.
13 But he who endures to the end will be saved!
14 And this Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in all the world for a witness to all peoples, and then shall the end come.
15 So when you see the *Abomination of Desolation* spoken of by Daniel the prophet standing in the Holy of Holies,
16 Let everyone in Judea run for the hills!
17 Don't even stop to take anything out of your house!
18 Let anyone working in the field not even return home to get anything!
19 Woe to pregnant and nursing women at that time!
20 And pray that your time to flee doesn't fall in the cold of winter or on the Sabbath [when you are commanded not to travel].
21 For at that time shall be a great tribulation, the like of which has never been seen, nor ever will be seen again.
22 And unless God intervenes to halt things, no one will survive. But for the sake of His elect people, God will intervene and cut things short.
23 In those days, if any man says, "The Messiah may be found in this place or that"--don't believe him!
24 For false Messiahs and false prophets will arise and do great signs and wonders that would fool even the true followers of God if that were possible.
25 Remember I've told you this before:
26 If they say the "real" Messiah is in the desert, don't go! If they say the "real" Messiah is hidden in some secret place--don't believe it!
27 For the Son of Man's coming shall be as fast as lightning flashing from east to west!
28 For, "Where the body is, the vultures gather."

29 Just after the tribulation period, *the sun and moon will grow dark, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the demonic powers of the heavens will be shaken* [and thrown down].
30 Then shall the sign of the Son of Man appear in the sky, and all the nations on earth will mourn as they see him coming with the hosts of heaven in all of his power and great glory!
31 And he shall send out his angels with the blast of a *shofar*, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.
32 Now learn a lesson from the fig tree: When the branches are green and full of leaves, you know that summer is at hand.
33 So when you see these signs appearing, know that what has been prophesied is close, and even at the doors!
34 I tell you truly, the generation that sees these things will not die out before what I prophesied comes to pass.
35 The universe and the earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away!
36 But as for the [*Rosh Hashanah*] that will see the culmination of these things, no one knows when it will be--not man, not angel, but my Father alone.
37 But as the days of Noah were, so will the days be when the Son of Man returns.
38 In the days before the flood they were going about life as usual: Eating, drinking, marrying, and so on, up to the point Noah entered the ark [and God shut the door].
39 They didn't realize what was happening until the flood swept them away. So will the Son of Man's coming be!
40 At that time, two shall be working in a field--one will be accepted and taken, and the other will be rejected and left.
41 Two women will be grinding flour at a mill--one will be accepted and taken, and the other will be rejected and left.
42 Watch then, for you don't know just when your Lord will return!
43 And keep in mind that if the owner of a mansion had known what time of night a thief was coming, he would have stayed awake, waiting--and his house wouldn't have been burgled!
44 So be likewise vigilant, for in such an hour that you're not expecting it, the Son of Man will come!
45 Who is a faithful and wise steward the master can leave in charge to feed those in the household while he is away?
46 The steward who does that will be blessed when his master comes and sees him being faithful in doing these things.
47 Truly I say to you, that master will elevate him to overseer over all he has.
48 But if an evil steward says to himself, "My master isn't going to return for a long time,"
49 And beats his underlings, and then goes out to party with the drunkards,
50 The master will return on a day when the steward isn't looking for him, and at an hour the steward doesn't expect,
51 And cut him into pieces and throw him out into the same place of punishment as the hypocrites--a place where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 25

1 When that happens, the Messianic Kingdom will be likened to ten virgins who took oil lamps, and went out to meet the bridegroom.
2 Five of these were wise, and five were foolish.
3 The foolish brought lamps, but no spare oil.
4 The wise brought spare oil flasks with their lamps.
5 The bridegroom took his time and didn't immediately appear, so they fell asleep waiting [and their lamps went out].
6 Then, at midnight, someone cried out: "The bridegroom is coming--go out and meet him!"
7 Then the virgins arose and began to ready their lamps.
8 The foolish said to the wise, "Loan us some oil--our lamps went out!"
9 But the wise replied, "We can't, lest we run out of oil ourselves. Go and buy some oil for yourselves from a vendor!"
10 So the foolish went to buy some, but the bridegroom came in the meantime and the wedding party went into the house, and the door was shut behind them.
11 Finally, the foolish virgins returned. They tried to enter, calling out, "Lord! Lord! Open up the door for us!"
12 But he answered from behind the door, "I tell you in truth, I don't know you!"
13 So keep watch, for *you* do not know 'The Day and the Hour' that the Son of Man will return.
14 For the Messianic Kingdom is like a man who was going on a long trip to a faraway country, who called his servants and assigned some money to them for investment.
15 He gave five ounces of gold to one, two ounces to another, and one ounce to a last, according to how wise he thought they were. Then he left on his journey.
16 The man with five ounces of gold did some buying and trading, and he doubled the money.
17 The one with two ounces of gold did likewise.
18 But the one with only an ounce of gold simply went out and buried his lord's money in the ground.
19 After a long time, the lord of the servants returned and called them to account for what they had done.
20 The one with five ounces of gold brought back ten, saying, "Lord, look! I've turned the five ounces of gold you gave me into ten!"
21 His lord said, "Well done, you good and faithful servant! You have been faithful over a few things--now I will make you ruler over many things. [Come rejoice with me, and take on new, more important duties!]"
22 The one with two ounces of gold came up, and said, "Lord, look! I have turned your two ounces of gold into four ounces!"
23 His lord said, "Well done, you good and faithful servant! You have been faithful over a few things--now I will make you ruler over many things. [Come rejoice with me, and take on new, more important duties as well!]"
24 But the servant with only one ounce of gold came up, and said, "Lord, I know you are a stern man who lets others take the risks for him and keeps whatever profits they make.
25 "I was afraid of what you'd do if I lost your money so I hid your gold in a hole. Look--here it is back!"
26 His lord was furious, and answered, "You wicked, lazy servant--so you know I let others take the risks, and then take the profits they make?!
27 "Then you should have at least loaned the money out so I could get some interest on what I gave you. [Instead, you did nothing with it, and took no risks at all, showing you to be utterly useless!]
28 "Take that ounce of gold from him and give it to the servant with ten ounces of gold!"
29 "For everyone who has [understanding] shall be rewarded with much more. But he who has not [understanding] will lose what little he may have had!
30 "So cast that useless servant into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth!"
31 When the Son of Man comes in his glory, escorted by all the holy angels, then he will sit upon his glorious throne.
32 And before him will be gathered all peoples of the earth, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd does with sheep and goats [which are never allowed to be in the same flock].
33 He will set the sheep on his right hand but the goats on his left.

34 Then the King will say to those on his right, “Come, blessed of my Father, and inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world,
35 “For I was hungry, and you fed me; thirsty, and you gave me water; homeless, and you took me in;
36 “Naked, and you clothed me; sick, and you came and aided me; in prison, and you visited me!”
37 Then the righteous will answer: “Lord, when did we ever see you hungry, and fed you? Or thirsty, and gave you water?
38 “Or homeless, and took you in? Or naked, and gave you clothing?
39 “Or when did we see you sick or in prison, and come visit you?”
40 And the King will answer: “I tell you that when you did such things to even the least of these who are my brothers, you did it to me, personally!”
41 Then the King will say to those on his left, “Depart from me, you accursed ones! Go forth into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels!
42 “For I was hungry, and you didn’t feed me; thirsty, and you gave me no water;
43 “A homeless stranger, and you didn’t take me in; naked, and you gave me no clothes; in prison, and you didn’t visit me.”
44 These shall also answer, saying, “Lord, when did we see you hungry, or thirsty, or a homeless stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and didn’t aid you?”
45 And he will answer them, “I say to you that any time you did not help the least of these, you rejected helping me as well!”
46 So these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous will go into eternal life.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 26

1 Now when Jesus finally completed all these comments, he told the disciples:
2 As you know, in a couple of days will be the Passover. The Son of Man will then be betrayed to be crucified.
3 At this time, the chief Sadducee priests, along with some hostile Torah teachers and assorted religious and city leaders, met at the palace of the High Priest who was named Caiaphas.
4 They debated how to trick Jesus into being captured so they could kill him in a safe manner [that would avoid a public riot].
5 They said: It must not be on the Feast day, lest the people rise up and make trouble.
6 Jesus, meanwhile, retired to Bethany, and happened to be eating dinner in the house of Simon the leper [father of Judas].
7 While he was there, a woman came into the house with an alabaster container filled with costly ointment. She poured it upon his head as he reclined at the table.
8 But when the disciples saw this, they were disgusted, and said: Why this waste?!
9 This ointment could have been sold for a lot of money that could have been given to the poor!
10 When Jesus knew what they were saying, he answered them: Why are you troubling this woman? She has performed a good work upon me.
11 You will always have the poor with you, but I won’t always be here.
12 She has anointed my body like this in preparation for my burial.
13 And I want you to know that wherever in the world the Gospel is preached, what she did will be remembered and preached about too.
14 Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went to the chief Sadducee priests.
15 He said to them: What price would you pay for me to deliver Jesus into your hands? They agreed to pay him thirty silver coins.
16 From that time, Judas waited for an opportunity to betray him.
17 Now on the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked: Where do you want us to prepare a Passover *seder* for you?
18 Jesus answered: Go into Jerusalem to a certain man you will meet, and tell him, “My time is at hand. I, and my disciples, will observe the Passover at your house.”
19 The disciples did as Jesus commanded, and they prepared the *seder*.
20 Now when the evening came, Jesus reclined with the Twelve.
21 As they ate, Jesus said: Truly I tell you, that one of you will betray me.
22 They were all very sorrowful, and each began to ask him: Lord--is it I?
23 Jesus replied: He who dips his hand in the dish with me is the same who will betray me.
24 The son of Man will go to what awaits him as the Scripture foretells--but woe to the man responsible for it! It would be better for him to have never been born!
25 Then Judas, who was the one to betray him, said [quietly]: Rabbi, is it I? Jesus answered [quietly as well]: You have said it.
26 As they continued the meal, Jesus took unleavened bread, said a blessing, and broke it, handing out pieces to his disciples. He said: Take and eat, for this is my body.
27 Then he took the cup, said a blessing, and gave it to the disciples, saying: Drink this, all of you.
28 This is the New covenant in my blood, which shall be shed for many so that their sins will be forgiven.
29 I tell you that I will not drink fruit of the grapevine again until I drink it new with you in the Kingdom of my Father.
30 And after they had sung one of the Hymns of Ascent, they went out to the Mount of Olives.
31 Jesus said to them: All of you will stumble tonight because of me, for it is written: **I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad**.
32 But after I rise again, I will wait for you in Galilee.
33 Peter spoke up, saying: Even if all these other men stumble because of you--*I* never will!
34 Jesus said back to him: Truly I tell you, Peter, that before the “rooster” crows, you will deny me three times.
35 Peter assured him: Even if I have to die at your side, I will not deny you! The other disciples also said things like this.
36 Then Jesus and the rest arrived at an [olive press] called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to the disciples: Sit here, while I go pray over there.
37 Jesus took Peter, along with Zebedee’s two sons, James and John, a few yards away. Then he began to be very sorrowful and troubled in spirit.
38 He said to them: The sorrow is almost more pressure than I can bear, and keep my life. Wait here, and keep watch with me.
39 Jesus went a little farther and fell on his face, praying: O my Father--if it is possible, let me not have to drink this cup that awaits me. But not my will be done, but Yours!
40 He came back to the disciples and found them asleep, so he awakened Peter, and said: What--you couldn’t watch with me for one hour?!
41 Watch and pray, lest you fall to temptation. Your spirit may be willing, but your flesh is weak!
42 Jesus went back, and for the second time prayed: O my Father, if this cup cannot pass from me unless I must drink from it, Your will be done!
43 Again, Jesus went back to find the disciples asleep, for they had become very tired.

44 So he left them alone and went back, praying likewise for the third time.
45 Then he returned to the disciples, saying: Go ahead, and sleep. The hour is come, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners.
46 Get up--let us go on to what awaits. See--the one who is betraying me has arrived!
47 While he was yet speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived at the head of a great crowd armed with swords and clubs that had been sent by the chief priests and elders of the people.
48 The traitor had told them beforehand to watch for his signal: The one I go up and kiss is Jesus--take him into custody.
49 So he came right up to Jesus, and said: Hail, master! And he kissed him.
50 Jesus said: Why are you here, "friend"?! Then they came up, laid hold on Jesus, and took him away.
51 Now Peter, at seeing all this, drew out a sword and swung it, cutting off an ear of a servant of the High Priest.
52 Jesus told him: Sheath your sword, for those who live by the sword will die by the sword.
53 Don't you think I could ask to my Father and He would instantly send twelve legions of angels to help me?
54 But if I did, how would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must be this way.
55 Jesus then said to the crowd: Why do you come with swords and clubs to take me into custody like I'm some kind of bandit? I sat in the Temple daily, and taught in your presence--and you did not take me then, did you?
56 But all this was done so that what the prophets foretold in the Scriptures would be fulfilled. It was then that the disciples abandoned him and ran for their lives.
57 Meanwhile, the ones who had hold of Jesus led him away to the palace of Caiaphas, the High Priest, where the Torah teachers and assorted religious leaders had assembled.
58 Peter, meanwhile, followed from a safe distance and finally made his way into Caiaphas' palace where he mingled with some of the servants in the courtyard, hoping to see what would happen.
59 Now the chief Sadducee priests, other religious leaders, and all the members of the [city] Sanhedrin, looked for pairs of liars who would falsely swear that Jesus had done something worthy of death.
60 But they found none who could get their stories straight, until one last pair of false witnesses came up,
61 Who declared: This man said, "I am able to destroy the Temple of God, and rebuild it in three days."
62 Caiaphas, hearing this, arose and spoke: You have no answer to this? The comments these men say you
made--what did you mean?
63 But Jesus remained silent. The High Priest, irritated, finally said to him: I demand, by the Living God, that you tell us whether you claim to be the Messiah and [King of Israel]!
64 Jesus now answered: You have said it! Nevertheless, I say to you all, that the day will come when you see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of "The Power," and coming in the clouds of heaven!
65 Then the High Priest tore his robes [disqualifying himself from making the Passover sacrifice for the people], saying: He has blasphemed God! Who needs more witnesses? You all heard his blasphemy!
66 What is your verdict? They answered: He is guilty, and must die!
67 Then they spit in his face and struck him; and others slapped him in the face with their palms,
68 Saying: Prophesy to us, Messiah! What is the name of the man who struck you?
69 While this was going on, Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came up who said: You were with Jesus of Galilee too!
70 But he denied it to the crowd, saying: I don't know what you're talking about!
71 He left, and eventually found his way near the gate to the street where another female servant caught sight of him, and told the others: This man was also with Jesus of Nazareth!
72 Then Peter swore: I don't know the man!
73 A while later, others standing around came up, saying: You *must* be one of them--you have a Galilean accent!
74 Peter then invoked curses on himself if he knew Jesus, and swore an oath, saying: I don't know that man! And as he did, the "rooster" cried out.
75 Then Peter remembered the words of Jesus: "Before the 'rooster' crows, you will deny me three times." And he left, weeping bitterly.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 27

1 At dawn, the chief Sadducee priests and the religious leaders of the people debated how to put Jesus to death.
2 After they had tied his hands together, they led him to Pontius Pilate, the Roman Prefect [who had come from Caesarea to Jerusalem because of the Passover Festival].
3 Then Judas, who had betrayed him, when he saw that Jesus was condemned by the religious authorities, regretted what he had done, and returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and elders.
4 He said: I have sinned in betraying an innocent man to you. They answered: That's *your* problem, not ours!
5 Then Judas threw down the silver in the Holy Place, and left to go hang himself.
6 The chief Sadducee priests took back the silver, but said: This is blood money, and the Torah does not allow it to go into the treasury to be used for holy purposes.
7 So they debated, and wound up using it for a public work: They purchased a field from a potter and used it as a place to bury foreigners in.
8 That's why the field is called the *Field of Blood*, even to this day.
9 This fulfilled a prophecy in the books categorized under the Jeremiah scroll: **And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value;**
10 **And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.**
11 When Jesus stood before the Prefect, Pilate asked him: Are you the King of the Jews? Jesus replied: You said it!
12 But when the religious leaders who brought him made accusations, Jesus did not make a reply.
13 Then Pilate said: Do you hear all the crimes they accuse you of?
14 But Jesus said nothing to him, which caused the Prefect to be amazed.
15 Now at the Passover [and other] Festivals, the Prefect had a habit of releasing to the people a prisoner chosen by them [as a measure of good will].
16 Pilate happened to have a notorious criminal named bar Abbas [--meaning *Son of the Father*--] in jail.
17 Thus, with a crowd handy, Pilate asked: Whom do you wish released to you--bar Abbas? Or this Jesus, who is called 'anointed'?
18 Pilate, you see, knew the priests had brought Jesus to him out of petty jealousy.
19 Beyond that, when he had taken the Judgment Seat, he had received an urgent letter from his wife that read: *Don't have anything to do with that innocent man! I had a horrible dream about him today!*

20 But the Sadducees and other religious leaders, meanwhile, had persuaded the crowd to ask for bar Abbas, and to demand Jesus be slain.
21 So when the governor asked which of the two they wanted released, they shouted out: bar Abbas!
22 Pilate then said: So what shall I do with Jesus, who is called 'anointed'? The crowd shouted back: Let him be crucified!
23 And the Prefect said: Why? For what evil does he deserve this? But they cried out all the louder: Let him be crucified!
24 When Pilate saw the crowd was getting riotous, and would not be persuaded by him, he called for a bowl of water and washed his hands before them, saying: I am innocent of this guiltless person's blood! *You* see to it!
25 Then all the crowd answered: Fine--his blood be on us, and our children, then!
26 So Pilate released bar Abbas to the crowd; then he had Jesus flogged, and ordered him to be crucified.
27 The legionnaires took Jesus into their barracks, and gathered round with their fellows.
28 They stripped him, and put a scarlet robe on him.
29 When they had woven a crown from a thorny vine, they placed it on his head and stuck a reed stick in his right hand, then they mockingly bowed before him, shouting: Hail, King of the Jews!
30 And they spat on him, and hit him over the head with the stick.
31 After they tired of this mockery, they took the robe off him and put back on his own clothing, then led him away to be crucified.
32 As they were going out of the city, they found a man--Simon of Cyrene--whom they ordered to help Jesus carry his cross.
33 And when they had come to a place outside the city called Golgotha, which means, *Place of the Skull*,
34 They offered him some vinegar mixed with gall to drink--but when Jesus tasted it, he would not drink it down.
35 And they crucified him, then cast dice for his clothing, so that which was spoken by the prophet could be fulfilled: **They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.**
36 Then they sat down to watch the spectacle.
37 A sign nailed over Jesus' head read: THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.
38 Two thieves were also crucified with Jesus, one at his right hand, and the other on his left.
39 Those that passed by wagged their heads and cursed Jesus, saying:
40 You who can destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days--if you *are* the Son of God, come down from that cross, and prove it!
41 The Sadducee priests, the Torah teachers, and other religious elders of Israel also mocked, saying:
42 He saved others, but he can't save himself! If he is the King of Israel, let him come down off that cross now, and we will believe in him!
43 He trusted in God, so let God deliver him now if He wants him! He said, after all, 'I am the Son of God'!
44 The thieves crucified with him likewise railed in his face.
45 Now from noon to 3 PM, there was a great darkness over all the area.
46 About 3 in the afternoon, Jesus cried out in a loud voice: *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani*, which in Aramaic means: *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*
47 [Because the words for *My God* and the name of Elijah in Aramaic are both pronounced "Eli,"] some thought Jesus was calling for Elijah.
48 And immediately one of them ran, took a sponge, and dipped it in non-kosher vinegar wine. Then he put it on a stick and lifted it up to Jesus' lips to drink.
49 The rest said: Leave him alone, and let's see if Elijah comes to save him!
50 Jesus, when he cried out again in a loud voice, gave up the ghost.
51 When he did, the great curtain sealing off the Holy of Holies was split in two from the top to the bottom, and the rocks split from a great earthquake!
52 And some of the graves opened up, and many righteous people who had been asleep in death arose,
53 And for a time after Jesus' resurrection, they went into the holy city of Jerusalem and appeared to many people [before returning to their graves].
54 Now when a centurion and some of his men watching Jesus saw the earthquake and what was happening, they were greatly afraid, and said: Truly this *was* the son of God!
55 Many women were at the scene, watching from a distance. These were women from Galilee who were followers of Jesus, and had ministered to him.
56 Among these was Mary of Magdala, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children, James and John.
57 When dusk approached, there came a rich man from Arimathaea named Joseph who was a disciple of Jesus,
58 He went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. Pilate agreed, and gave permission for him to take the body.
59 After Joseph received the body, he wrapped it in clean linen,
60 And laid it in his own new tomb that had been carved out of the rock, rolling a large stone over the door. Then he departed.
61 And Mary of Magdala, and the other Mary [--mother of James, Joses, and Salome--] sat and watched over against the tomb.
62 The next day, which followed Preparation Day, the chief Sadducee priests and the Pharisees came in a group to Pilate.
63 They said: Sir--we recall that this deceiver said, while he was still alive, "After three days, I will rise again."
64 Command that the tomb be sealed and watched until after three days pass, lest his followers come by night and steal the body, saying to the people, "He has risen from the dead!" Then this last lie will be even worse than all the others!
65 Pilate said in response: You have your own Temple guards--use *them* and secure the tomb yourselves!
66 So they went and sealed the tomb, setting some guards to watch over it.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 28

1 Early Sunday morning at the Sabbath's end, Mary of Magdala, and Mary [--mother of James, Joses, and Salome --] went to see the tomb.
2 And a great earthquake happened, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and rolled the stone away from the tomb. Then he sat down upon it.
3 His face was like lightning, and his garment was white as snow,
4 And the terrified guards fainted dead away at sight of him.
5 Then the angel said to the women: Don't be afraid! I know you seek Jesus, who was crucified.
6 He is gone, for he is risen as he said he would! Come and see where the Lord was laying,
7 Then go quickly to his disciples, and tell them that he has risen from the dead and is waiting for them in Galilee, where they will see him. Lo, I have told you!
8 The women ran in awe and great joy from the place, intending to report to the disciples what they had been told.

9 But as they went to tell the disciples, Jesus met them, and said: Greetings to you all! And they fell down and held him by his feet, reverencing him.
10 Then Jesus said: Don't be afraid. Go tell my brothers to go to Galilee, where they will see me.
11 Now as the women departed, some of the guards awakened and went into Jerusalem to tell the chief Sadducee priests what had happened.
12 Then the tribunal was hastily assembled once more, and after a discussion decided to pay a great deal of money to the guards,
13 Saying: Make sure your story is that you fell asleep, and Jesus' disciples stole the body in the night.
14 If any heat comes down to you from Pilate, we'll back you up, and intercede for you.
15 So the men took the bribe and proclaimed this story, which is believed and claimed by the Jews to this day.
16 Eventually, the eleven disciples made it to a mountain in Galilee where Jesus awaited them.
17 When they saw him, they worshipped him, but some [weren't certain what to think].
18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying: All authority is given to me in heaven and on earth.
19 As you go to the nations of the earth, teach the Gospel to them, and baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit:
20 Teach them to observe all the things I have taught you, and remember--I will be with you always, even to the end of the world! Amen.

Mark

MARK CHAPTER 1

1 This is how the "Good News" regarding Jesus, the Messiah and Son of God began!
2 It was written in the scroll of the prophets, **Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee**.
3 **The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight**.
4 John the Baptizer immersed people out in the wilderness, and proclaimed the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.
5 And everyone from Judea and Jerusalem went out to be baptized by him in the Jordan river, [publicly] confessing their sins.
6 John dressed in a garment of camel hair with a leather girdle around his loins. He ate [carob] and wild honey.
7 And he preached, saying: There is one coming after me who is mightier than I am, whose sandal straps I am not even worthy to bend down and untie!
8 I have certainly baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit!
9 It came to pass in the days of John's ministry that Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee, and was baptized by him in the Jordan.
10 And as Jesus came up out of the water, John had a vision of the heavens opening and the Spirit of God descending upon Jesus like a dove;
11 And a heavenly voice spoke, and said: You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!
12 Immediately after this, the Spirit compelled Jesus to go into the desert.
13 He was there for forty days, being tempted by Satan, and facing wild animals; and angels ministered to him.
14 Now after Herod Antipas had put John in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the "Good News" of the Kingdom of God,
15 Saying: The time is here, and the Kingdom of God is at hand! Repent, all of you, and believe the Gospel!
16 Now as Jesus walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Shimon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea from a boat, for they were fishermen.
17 Jesus said to them: Come follow me, and I will cause you to fish for men!
18 And they immediately left their nets behind, and followed him.
19 When he'd gone a bit further down the shore, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his [younger] brother, who were also in a boat mending their nets.
20 He immediately called them too, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired hands, and went with him.
21 The group went to Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath Jesus entered the synagogue, and taught.
22 The people were amazed at his doctrine, for he taught as one who had authority, and not as the Torah teachers [who offered up opinion after opinion from the sages, living and dead, on what the Law meant].
23 Now in the synagogue was a man with a demon who cried out:
24 Let us alone! Why are you bothering us, Jesus of Nazareth? Are you here to destroy us? I know who you are--you are the Holy One of God!
25 But Jesus rebuked him, saying: Shut up, and come out of him!
26 When the demon had thrown the man to the ground in convulsions, it screamed out and left him.
27 Everyone was amazed, and wondered amongst themselves things like: What are we seeing? What sort of new teaching *is* this! He even has authority to command demon spirits, and they must obey him!
28 And his fame immediately spread throughout Galilee and the region.
29 After they left the synagogue, Jesus, James, and John went to stay at the house of Shimon and Andrew.
30 There, Shimon's mother-in-law was sick with a fever, and they told Jesus about her.
31 He came and took her by the hand, lifted her to her feet, and immediately the fever left. Then she prepared food for them.
32 At sunset, a host of sick people, along with many who were afflicted by demons, were brought to the house.
33 The whole city, in fact, was outside Shimon's door!
34 Jesus healed many who were ill, and he cast out many demons, though he did not allow the demons to speak because they knew who and what he was.
35 Hours before dawn, Jesus sought out an isolated place, and there he prayed.
36 A while later, Shimon and the others followed after him.
37 When they found Jesus, they told him: Everyone is looking for you!
38 But Jesus said: Let us go instead to the next towns so I can preach there as well, for this is why I came.
39 So Jesus preached in the synagogues throughout Galilee, and he cast out demons too.
40 At one point, a leper came to him and knelt down, pleading: If you will it to be done, you can cleanse me of this disease!
41 Jesus, moved with compassion, extended his hand and touched him, saying: I do will it--so be cleansed!
41 [*Alternate reading*]: Jesus, irritated with him, extended his hand and touched him, saying: I do will it--so be cleansed!
42 As soon as he spoke this, the leprosy vanished, and he was cleansed!
43 Jesus sent him on his way, warning him:
44 Don't say anything to anyone about this healing, but go to the High Priest and make the required offering in the Law for a cleansed leper. This will be a testimony for the priests [of what I am, and that miracles still happen].
45 But the man instead went and told everyone he saw. So many people descended upon Jesus after this that he could no longer go into any city, but had to retreat into the deserts; and people still came to him from every direction.

MARK CHAPTER 2

1 After a few days, Jesus returned to Shimon's house in Capernaum. It didn't take long for word to spread.
2 And in no time there was a crowd so thick that they couldn't even fit through the door as Jesus preached the Message to them.
3 Four men, meanwhile, brought a paralytic man [who could not move off his bed].
4 But when they saw it was impossible to get near Jesus because of the throng of people, they went around back, climbed upon the roof of the house; then pried off the tiles of the roof above Jesus so they could lower the sick man down--bed and all--into the house!
5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic man: Son--your sins are forgiven you!
6 But some of the Torah teachers sitting there who heard that were offended, and thought to themselves:
7 *Why does this man say blasphemous things?! Who but* God *can forgive sins?*
8 But Jesus immediately knew in his spirit what their thoughts were, and he answered by saying: Why are you debating such things inside your hearts?

9 Is it easier to say that a man's sins are forgiven than it is to tell a paralytic to get up, pick up his bed, and walk?
10 But so that you can know that the Son of Man [--the *bar Enash* Daniel prophesied of--] has the authority on earth to forgive sins:
11 I say to you--get up, pick up your bed, and go back home!
12 And immediately he got up, picked up his bed, and walked out before the whole crowd! Everyone was dumbfounded, and glorified God, saying: We've never seen anything like this!
13 Jesus went out again to the shore, where a crowd soon gathered about him, and he taught them.
14 As he walked along, he saw [Matthew], son of Alphaeus, sitting at his tax-collecting booth, and he told him: Follow me! So he arose and followed him.
15 That evening, as Jesus dined in [Matthew's] house, many tax collectors and unrighteous people--some of whom followed Jesus about as he traveled--sat with Jesus and his disciples.
16 But when the Pharisee Torah teachers saw Jesus dining with tax collectors and sinners, they asked the disciples: How is it that he eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?
17 When Jesus heard this, he said: The well have no need of a doctor; it's the sick who do! I came not to call the righteous to repent, but to call those who are sinners.
18 Now both the disciples of John and the Pharisees, would often fast [and afflict their souls by rejecting anything pleasurable, while offering up many prayers]. Once, they were all fasting, and some [of John's disciples] came to Jesus to ask: Why do both the disciples of John and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not?
19 Jesus responded: Can the bridegroom's retinue fast [and mourn] while the bridegroom is in their midst? As long as the bridegroom is with them they cannot fast [for the joy they have].
20 But soon enough, the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them. When those days come, they will indeed fast [and mourn].
21 No one sews a patch of brand new cloth on an old article of clothing, for the new patch will shrink in the wash and tear an even bigger hole in the garment.
22 Nor do men put fresh, fermenting wine in stiff old wineskins that can crack and spill the contents out. You put new wine into new wineskins.
23 One Sabbath [during the Feast of Unleavened Bread], Jesus was passing through a wheat field, and as they walked along making a path, the disciples plucked some of the wheat heads to eat.
24 Some Pharisees who watched this were offended, and said: Look there--why are they doing what is forbidden in the Torah on the Sabbath?!
25 But Jesus responded: Have you never read what David did when he and his men were hungry, and had no food?
26 How he went into the Tabernacle of God [when Abiathar was High Priest,] and ate the *shewbread* that the Law restricts to the priests? And how he gave some to his men as well? [Was God offended by this "transgression"?]
27 Jesus concluded: The Sabbath came into existence to serve man; man did not come into existence to serve the Sabbath!
28 Therefore, the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath [with the right to determine what acts are, and are not, permissible to do on it].

MARK CHAPTER 3

1 Jesus again returned to the synagogue where there was a man with a deformed hand.
2. [Offended by his earlier Sabbath comments,] the religious leaders were also there to see if Jesus would heal him on the Sabbath so they could have some accusation to make against him.
3 Jesus said to the man with the deformed hand: Stand forth!
4 Then he asked the religious leaders: Does the Law permit doing good on the Sabbath? Or does it permit doing evil? Does it allow saving life on the Sabbath? Or does it allow killing? But they would not answer.
5 After he had stared angrily at them, frustrated at their hard hearts, Jesus said to the man: Stretch out your hand! He did, and the hand was made whole like the other!
6 These Pharisees then left, and quickly made an alliance with a group of elite priests--supporters of the Herods--and they all debated how to destroy Jesus.
7 But Jesus and his disciples left for the shore of the lake, and a great multitude from Galilee and Judea followed him.
8 Crowds from Jerusalem, Idumea, from the east side of the Jordan River, and even Tyre and Sidon also joined them after hearing what great miracles Jesus was doing.
9 But Jesus ordered the disciples to find and keep a boat handy in case he was forced into the water by the crowd thronging him.
10 For people were being whipped into a frenzy at seeing Jesus healing many people, and hosts tried to get close enough just to touch him, because many had serious diseases.
11 Demon spirits, when they saw him, caused the people they inhabited to fall down before him, and they shouted: You are the Son of God!
12 But he sternly commanded them to keep silent, and not reveal who and what he was.
13 In time, he went up to a mountain calling for some of his disciples to follow, and they went with him.
14 He [laid hands on, and] ordained twelve, making them his [chief] disciples, that they might travel with him [and learn]; then go out to preach.
15 He also gave them the power to heal people, and to exorcise demon spirits.
16 And Jesus gave Shimon the surname of Peter--or *Rock*.
17 James and John, the sons of Zebedee, he dubbed *Thunderheads*.
18 The disciples also included: Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddeus [Jude], Simon the Cannanean [Zealot],
19 Along with Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. [After they were all ordained,] they returned to a house in town.
20 The multitude quickly assembled again, and Jesus and the disciples couldn't even find time to eat a snack.
21 When Jesus' friends heard about all this, they tried to usher him away from the scene, saying: He must have lost his mind!
22 Meanwhile, the Torah teachers from Jerusalem were saying: He is possessed by Beelzebub, and by the dark power of the prince of devils he is casting out all these demons!
23 When he heard this, Jesus summoned the Torah teachers over and spoke parables to them, saying: Why would Satan cast out his own demons?
24 If a kingdom is divided by civil war, it will fall.
25 A family divided will not stand.
26 And if Satan rises up against his own forces and turns against them, then he, himself, cannot stand--and is actually bringing about his own downfall!
27 Look--no man enters into the house of a mighty man and takes his goods unless he first confronts the mighty man, overcomes him, and ties him up. Then he takes every item of value from the house with impunity.

28 And I want you to know that all sins will be forgiven mankind, and all evil words they speak will also be forgiven.
29 But he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, for he is caught in an everlasting sin he cannot repent of.
30 He told them this because they said, "He has a demon spirit!"
31 Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent word for Jesus to come out.
32 As the crowd sat around him, Jesus was told: Your mother and brethren are here, and want to see you.
33 But he answered: Who are my mother and brethren?
34 Then he looked about to those who sat around him [listening to his words], and said: These are my mother and brethren!
35 For anyone who does the will of God is my brother, my sister, and my mother!

MARK CHAPTER 4

1 And Jesus began again to teach along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, but so many people came that he had to get into a boat and preach from a few yards out on the water as the crowd listened on shore.
2 He used many parables in teaching his doctrine, including this one:
3 Listen! A farmer went out to sow some seeds.
4 As he sowed, some fell by the side of the road, and the birds came and ate the seed up.
5 Some fell on rocky ground where there wasn't much soil, and the seed sprouted immediately because it lay on the surface of the dirt.
6 But when the sun grew hot, it withered up and died because it had no roots.
7 Some seed fell among the thorns, and the thorns choked the plants so that they gave no fruit.
8 But some fell on good ground, and grew up to yield fruit: Some a little; some a lot; and some bountiful.
9 Jesus said to them: He who is able to understand, let him understand.
10 When Jesus was alone, his followers and the twelve apostles asked him what the parable meant.
11 He replied: You have been given the privilege to understand the mysteries regarding the Messianic Kingdom, but those outside of our group do not have that privilege, and so I speak to them in parables,
12 That [as was prophesied], *seeing they will see, yet not perceive; and hearing they shall hear, but not understand; lest at any time they should be converted and their sins forgiven*.
13 Jesus added: Do you really not understand this parable? If not, how can you understand anything I am going to teach in parables?
14 The sower sows the Message [of the Gospel].
15 Those by the wayside represent people who hear the Message. But after they've heard it, Satan comes immediately to steal away the Message that was sown in their hearts.
16 Likewise, the seed sown on stony ground represents people who hear the Message, and immediately receive it with joy,
17 But they have no root of the Message in their hearts, so these endure for a time, but when trouble or persecution comes upon them for the sake of the Message, they immediately stumble [in their faith].
18 The seed sown amongst the thorns represents those who hear the Message,
19 But the burdens of this world, the lie that wealth is the answer to all problems, and the lust for possessions choke the Message so that it never bears fruit in their lives [because they set their priorities on these other things].
20 But the seed sown on good ground represents those who hear the Message, receive it into their hearts, and bring forth fruit: Some a little; some a lot; and some bountiful.
21 Jesus added: Is a candle meant to be put under a basket or to be hid under a bed? Isn't it meant to be put in a candlestick?
22 So you cannot hide what you are and what is inside you, be it good or bad; and in time, every secret thing will be revealed to all.
23 If any man can understand what I mean, then let him understand!
24 Jesus continued: Be sure to listen carefully: What you hear, and your degree of understanding of it, will affect how much revelation you will receive, and the more you understand, the more revelation you will receive.
25 For he that has [understanding] shall be given more; and he that does not have [understanding] will have what little [revelation] he has taken from him.
26 He added: This is why the Messianic Kingdom itself is akin to a farmer who sows seed into the ground,
27 And then goes to bed and gets up every morning. The seed will grow of its own accord, and it doesn't matter that the farmer doesn't understand how that happens.
28 For the *earth* will produce the growth--first, a blade of grass, then a sprout, and finally a full stalk of wheat.
29 Then, when the fruit that sprang from the earth that birthed it is ripe, the farmer immediately goes out and puts the sickle to his harvest because the time has come for it.
30 Jesus asked: What shall we compare the Kingdom of God to? What is it like?
31 It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the ground, is the smallest of seeds on earth.
32 But it grows to be among the largest of herbs, shooting out great branches the birds of the air nest in.
33 With many parables like this, Jesus conveyed his doctrine as best as they were able to understand it.
34 But he never spoke to the crowds without using parables. Then later, when they were alone, he would explain the meanings to his disciples.
35 Now the same day as he spoke this parable, as dusk approached, he said: Let us go to the other side of the lake.
36 After the crowds were sent away, they conveyed Jesus across the Sea of Galilee in a boat. A few other boats followed as well.
37 But a great storm arose, and the waves washed into the boat and threatened to swamp it.
38 Jesus, meanwhile, was asleep at the stern, resting upon a cushion. They awakened him, and said: Master--don't you care that we're going to drown?!
39 So Jesus got up and rebuked the wind and waves, saying: Peace! Be still! And the wind halted, and the sea became very calm.
40 Jesus then asked the disciples: Why are you so afraid? How is it that you have no faith?
41 Yet they feared greatly, and said to one another: What sort of man is this that even the wind and the sea obey his commands?!

MARK CHAPTER 5

1 So they made it to the country of the Gadarenes, across the Sea of Galilee.
2 When Jesus stepped out of the boat, a [naked,] man possessed by an unclean spirit ran out of the tombs and came up to him.
3 He lived there among the graves and tombs, and no one could overpower and bind him--even with chains!
4 They had often tried that with leg irons and manacles, and he would just tear them into pieces, then turn on those who tried to overcome him. The man simply could not be controlled or reasoned with.

5 Day and night, he would stalk about the hills and tombs, howling and making cuts in his flesh with sharp stones.
6 But when he saw Jesus in the distance, he ran up and knelt in obeisance.
7 He shouted out: What do I and you have to do with each other, Jesus--Son of the Most High God?! Swear by God that you won't torment me [if I go, for Judgment Day isn't here yet]!
8 He said this after Jesus told the demon: "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!"
9 [Surprised at the demon's power,] Jesus asked him: What's your name? It answered: "Legion"--for there are many of us in here!
10 The demon then implored Jesus not to send him and his fellow demons out of the area.
11 Now there was a large herd of pigs feeding in the nearby hills.
12 And the demons begged Jesus, saying: Send us into those [unclean] pigs, that we may at least possess *them*!
13 Jesus agreed, and the demons went out from the man and possessed the pigs. Then the herd--numbering two thousand pigs--ran off a cliff and drowned in the lake!
14 The overseers of the herd saw this, and ran into town and the outlying area to spread word of what had happened. Then everyone came out to see for himself.
15 The people then approached Jesus and saw the man who had formerly been possessed by the legion of demons sitting down clothed and apparently in his right mind, and they were afraid.
16 Others who had seen the incident told the story of how the demons left the man and entered into the pigs.
17 But the people urged Jesus to go away from their territory.
18 Now when Jesus had returned to the boat, the former demoniac begged to go with him.
19 But Jesus said no, and told him: Go home, and tell your friends what a great thing the Lord has done for you, and how he had compassion on you.
20 So the man departed, and spread the tale throughout the "Ten Cities" region--and everyone was amazed [for they all knew about this wild man and were stunned at his deliverance].
21 When Jesus sailed back to the other side of the lake, so many people were waiting on the shore that he could hardly even land and get out of the boat!
22 Now one of the rulers of the local synagogue, whose name was Jairus, came and fell at Jesus' feet when he saw him,
23 And pleaded with him, saying: My little girl is dying! Please come and lay hands on her so she will be healed; and she will live!
24 So Jesus accompanied Jairus with the crowd following and thronging about him.
25 Now there was a certain woman who had suffered from a uterine discharge for twelve years,
26 Who had followed all the advice of the doctors, and spent every cent she had on medicine and painful cures--but she never improved, and actually got worse.
27 Having heard about Jesus, she forced her way through the crowd behind him and reached through them to touch his prayer shawl.
28 For she said to herself, *If I can but touch his clothing, I will be healed!*
29 The moment she touched him, the bleeding stopped, she felt the change in her, and realized she was healed!
30 Immediately Jesus halted, realizing that power had gone out from him. So he turned and looked all around, asking: Who touched my clothes?
31 Puzzled, the disciples shouted back: You see that you're almost being crushed to death by this crowd, yet you're asking, "Who touched me"?!
32 But Jesus kept looking around, trying to find the woman who had touched him.
33 Then the woman, fearing and trembling, and knowing it was she Jesus was looking for, fell at his feet, and told him the whole truth.
34 And Jesus answered: Daughter, your faith has made you whole. Go with peace upon you, and be healed of your ailment.
35 While he was speaking this, some from Jairus' house came up, and said: Your daughter has died. Why trouble the Master any further?
36 When Jesus heard that, he said to Jairus: Don't give in to fear--just believe!
37 And he wouldn't let anyone other than Peter, James, and John the brother of James, accompany him.
38 When he came to Jairus' house, he saw a great commotion being made by the weeping mourners.
39 Upon Jesus entering, he said: Why are you making such a commotion? This girl is not dead, but only asleep.
40 When they heard that, they laughed derisively. But after Jesus expelled them all from the house except for the girl's parents and his three disciples, he went to where the girl was lying.
41 He took her by the hand, and said in Aramaic: *Little girl, arise!*
42 And immediately the girl, who was twelve years old, arose and walked. Everyone there was shocked to the core.
43 Jesus, however, warned them not to spread word of this miracle, and he instructed them to give the girl something to eat.

MARK CHAPTER 6

1 Jesus now left Capernaum to return to Nazareth, and his disciples accompanied him.
2 When the Sabbath came, he taught in the synagogue, and many of the people were amazed, saying: Where did he get all this [knowledge and talent]? What sort of wisdom has been given to him that at his hands such incredible miracles are performed?
3 Isn't this the carpenter, the son of Miriam? The brother of James, Joses, Judah, and Simon? Don't we know his sisters? So the people were offended by him.
4 But Jesus responded: A prophet is not without honor--except in his own country, among his own family, and in his own house.
5 So he could do no great miracles there except for healing a few sick people by laying hands on them.
6 He was amazed at their lack of faith, so [instead of working miracles,] he went about the area, teaching in the villages.
7 Then he called the twelve and began sending them out in pairs, giving them the power to exorcise demon spirits.
8 He told them not to take anything for their journey except a staff. They were not to take so little as a scrap of bread, a sack, or any money in a purse.
9 They were only to take a pair of sandals and one set of clothing.
10 And he instructed them: Stay in whatever house you enter into until your work in that city is done, and you leave for elsewhere.
11 As for anyone who does not welcome you or receive your message--shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them when you leave. Truly, Sodom and Gomorrah will be better off than *that* city will, come Judgment Day!
12 So they went out, preaching that men should repent.
13 They also cast out many demons, and anointed many of the sick with oil, healing them.
14 Finally, Herod Antipas heard about Jesus and all he was doing, because his reputation was spreading everywhere. And he said: This must be John the Baptist risen from the dead, and *that's* why he can do such miracles!

15 But others said: “It is Elijah!” Or, “It is one of the ancient prophets returned, or else a new prophet *like* the ones in days of old!”
16 But Herod was convinced it was John, and when he heard that said: It is John, whom I beheaded--he has risen from the dead for sure!
17 For Herod Antipas had captured and cast John into prison for the sake of his brother Philip’s wife Herodias, whom he had taken and married.
18 John had condemned him for this, saying: The Torah does not permit you to marry your brother’s wife [through using Roman divorce]!
19 Therefore, Herodias held a grudge against John, and would have killed him, but she could not,
20 For Herod feared John, realizing he was a holy and just man of God. He even watched over him, and liked to hear him regularly, though he was troubled by what John said. [Thus, Herodias was forced to bide her time.]
21 Her chance finally came when Herod threw a banquet on his birthday, inviting all the chief officers, officials, and well-to-do businessmen in the region of Galilee.
22 It was during the banquet that Herodias’ young daughter Salome came in and did a striptease for Herod that pleased him and those sitting at the feast. Antipas exclaimed to her: Ask anything you wish, and I will give it to you!
23 He was so worked up, he even swore: Whatever you ask, I will give it--even half my kingdom!
24 So she went to her mother, and said: What should I ask for? Herodias told her: Ask for the head of John the Baptizer!
25 So she ran back to the banquet and announced: I want you to bring me the head of John the Baptizer on a platter right now!
26 Herod Antipas was exceedingly sorry to hear this, but for the sake of his pride before his guests, he had to honor his oath and accede to her request.
27 So Herod Antipas immediately sent an executioner out to the prison to behead John and bring back his head.
28 The executioner did this, and delivered John’s head on a platter to the adolescent girl Salome who, in turn, presented it to her mother Herodias.
29 When John’s disciples heard about this, they came and took the body, laying it in a tomb.
30 Meanwhile, Jesus’ apostles returned in a group, and gave a report of all they had been doing and teaching.
31 Jesus said: Let’s go to some isolated spot for some privacy and rest. He said this because there was a constant flow of people following him everywhere, and no one had time to even eat.
32 So they discreetly sailed off to a secluded place.
33 But many who knew Jesus saw them leave and guessed where they might be going--so crowds from all the cities actually ran around the lake, beat the ship to where it was heading, and were there waiting for him!
34 Moved with compassion as he exited the boat, Jesus began to teach many things to the vast crowd, because they were like lost sheep without a shepherd.
35 Now when night was about to fall, the disciples came, and said: This is an isolated area, and night is coming.
36 Send the people away to the villages to buy food, for they have nothing to eat.
37 Jesus answered: You feed them! They said back: [Shall we just create money out of thin air, and go buy them all dinner?!]
38 Jesus then replied: How much bread do we have amongst us? Go see. After the disciples checked, they answered: Five loaves, and a couple of fish.
39 So Jesus commanded the crowd to break into small groups and sit on the green grass.
40 So they sat down in groups of fifty and a hundred.
41 When Jesus had taken the loaves and fish, he looked up to heaven and blessed God. Then he broke up the loaves, dividing them and the fish among the disciples, and fed the crowd out of what was there.
42 Everyone ate until they were full,
43 And the leftover bread fragments and fish filled twelve baskets!
44 Moreover, the crowd that had eaten the bread numbered nearly five thousand men!
45 Just after this, he commanded the disciples to sail to Bethsaida, while he sent the crowds away.
46 After sending them away, Jesus departed to a mountain to pray.
47 During the night, the ship was on the lake, while Jesus was alone on shore.
48 He could see them rowing, but making no headway against the wind, for it was blowing against them. Around 3 AM, he then came out to them, walking upon the surface of the lake, and would have actually walked on by them!
49 But when they saw him walking on the water, they screamed in fear, thinking it was a ghost,
50 For they all saw him, and were terrified. But he immediately called out to them: Cheer up--it’s me! Don’t be afraid!
51 And he walked up, entered the ship, and the winds calmed down. To say everyone was amazed was an understatement!
52 For the miracle of the loaves hadn’t even caused them to expect that Jesus could do such things, for they had hard hearts.
53 When they had crossed to where they were going, they were now again in the land of the Gadarenes, and there they landed.
54 On disembarking from the ship, everyone recognized Jesus.
55 This time, he was welcomed, and some ran to spread word. Then everyone from the area brought the bed-ridden to be healed when they heard where Jesus was.
56 And anyplace Jesus went--be it village, town, or the countryside--they brought out the sick to lay in the streets, and they begged to be permitted to touch his prayer shawl; and everyone who did that was healed fully!

MARK CHAPTER 7

1 About this time, a group of Pharisees and Torah teachers from Jerusalem came on the scene.
2 But when they saw some of the disciples eating bread with unclean hands--that is, without first performing a ritual hand washing and prayer--they criticized them.
3 You see, the Pharisees, and all the Jews of Judea, do not eat without regularly immersing their arms to the elbows, for this is a tradition instituted by the elders of Israel.
4 When they return from the marketplace, for instance, they will not eat unless they perform this ritual, called the *Nitilat Yada’im*. They also perform similar immersions upon cups, pots, bronze vessels, and tables [to make them ritually pure].
5 So these Judean Pharisees and Torah teachers asked Jesus: Why do your disciples not keep rabbinic tradition, and immerse their hands before eating?!
6 But Jesus answered them by saying: Well did Isaiah prophesy about you hypocrites when he wrote: **This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.**
7 **Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.**
8 For, ignoring the commandments in the *written* Law, you elevate *oral* laws, like baptizing pots and cups, to even more importance

than written commandments, and you do things like that all the time!
9 And he said: Yes, you cunningly rationalize ways for your *oral* laws to take precedence over the *written* Law!
10 For instance, Moses said, *See to the needs of your parents;* and, *Anyone who curses his mother or father must be put to death*.
11 But then *you* teach that if a man says to his father or mother: "My goods are *Korban* [--
dedicated to the Temple--] and so I do not have to help you out of my own resources," he is relieved from observing that commandment.
12 So you permit him to turn his back on the needs of his parents,
13 Thus making the command of God meaningless because of your oral tradition. You do a lot of things like this!
14 Then Jesus summoned the crowd, and told them: Listen to me and understand, whoever can.
15 There is nothing from outside a man that can defile him when it enters him; it's what comes *out* of him that defiles him in God's eyes.
16 If you can understand--then understand!
17 When Jesus left the crowd and returned into the house he was staying at, the disciples asked him to explain what he meant.
18 He replied: Do you have no more understanding than those Pharisees? Do you not understand that a man cannot be defiled by things like the sort of food that he eats?
19 Because what he eats doesn't enter his heart, but his stomach, and eventually leaves him, going into the sewer. [Thus, Jesus pronounced all foods clean.]
20 [But what comes out of his mouth can defile his soul.]
21 For what comes out, comes from within the heart of man, where adultery, fornication, murder,
22 Theft, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lust, greed, blasphemy, pride and foolishness make their home.
23 All these evil things dwell in the heart of a man, and are what *really* defile him!
24 Jesus now left for the region of Tyre and Sidon, where he hoped to abide secretly in the house of someone there--but word got out,
25 For a certain woman, whose daughter was possessed by a demon, heard about him and came, falling at his feet.
26 She was a Gentile--a Syrophenician--and she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter.
27 But Jesus replied: Let the children eat their fill first, for it is not right to take their bread and simply toss it to the puppies.
28 She responded: True, Lord--but even the family dogs beneath the table get to eat the children's crumbs!
29 And Jesus answered: For saying this, go home--the demon is gone from your daughter.
30 When she returned home, she found it was so: The demon was gone, and her daughter was resting peacefully in bed.
31 And again leaving the area of Tyre and Sidon, Jesus returned to the Sea of Galilee by way of the "Ten Cities" region of Jordan.
32 At one point, they brought a man who was deaf and dumb; and they begged Jesus to touch him.
33 Jesus took him away from the crowd and put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spit, and touched the spittle to the man's tongue.
34 Looking up to heaven, he sighed, then said in Aramaic: *Be opened!*
35 And immediately the man could hear, and was able to speak clearly!
36 Jesus told the man and his friends not to tell anyone about the miracle, but the more he told people to keep silent, the more they seemed to tell everyone!
37 And everyone who heard was utterly astonished, saying: Everything he does is done well! He can even make the deaf and dumb able to hear and speak!

MARK CHAPTER 8

1 Once, there was a great crowd gathered who had nothing to eat, so Jesus summoned the disciples, and said:
2 I worry for this huge crowd, because they have been with me for three days, and have nothing to eat.
3 If I send them home hungry, some may faint on the way since they may have come from a far distance.
4 But the disciples answered: What can we do? How could anyone get food enough to feed this crowd out here in the desert?
5 Jesus asked them: How many loaves do you have? They replied: Seven.
6 Then he commanded the people to sit down on the ground, and he took the seven loaves and gave thanks to God. Then he broke them and began distributing them to the disciples to set before the people, and they did so.
7 They also had a few small fish, and after Jesus blessed God, he did the same thing as he had done with the bread, having the disciples hand them out to the crowd.
8 So everyone ate until they were full, and the leftovers filled seven baskets!
9 The crowd numbered about four thousand, by the way. After they had eaten, Jesus told them to return home.
10 Then Jesus took to sea again with the disciples and made his way to the region of Dalmanutha [on the west side of the Sea of Galilee, near Magdala].
11 There, some Pharisees wasted no time in interrogating him and demanding he produce a sign from heaven [to prove God was with him].
12 But Jesus sighed deeply in his spirit [for their hard hearts and blind eyes], and said: Why does this generation always demand a sign? I tell you truly, no sign will be given this generation!
13 So Jesus turned his back on them and re-entered the boat. He then sailed to the other side of the lake.
14 Now the disciples themselves had forgotten to bring any bread with them, and all they had in the boat was one loaf.
15 Jesus warned them, saying: Watch out! Don't eat bread yeasted by either the Pharisees or the Herodians!
16 The disciples didn't understand, so they murmured, speculating: Since we forgot to bring bread, he must mean we shouldn't buy any bread from the Pharisees or the Herodian priests.
17 When Jesus realized their train of thought, he said to them: Why do you think I'm talking about normal bread? Are you still not able to see past my language to the heart of what I mean? Are your hearts still hard?
18 *Having eyes, do you see not? Having ears, do you hear not?* Do you not remember what you've seen?
19 Jesus answered them: O faithless generation! How long must I be with you? How long must I put up with you [and your weakness of faith]? Bring the boy to me.
20 And when I fed four thousand with seven loaves, how many baskets of leftover bread did you recover? They answered: Seven.
21 So Jesus replied: How is it that you don't understand me then?
22 When the boat brought Jesus to Bethsaida, upon his arrival some people brought a blind man up to him, begging Jesus to touch [and heal] him.
23 Jesus took the blind man by the hand and led him out of town. Then he put some spittle on the man's eyes, laid hands upon him, and asked if he could see.

24 The man looked up, saying: I can see, but my vision is blurry--people look like trees moving about!
25 Jesus again placed his hands upon the man's eyes and then bade him to look up. When he did, his sight was fully restored and he could see people clearly.
26 Jesus then sent him back to his home, saying: Don't go into town, or tell anyone from the town about this miracle!
27 Jesus and the disciples, meanwhile, made their way to Caesarea Philippi, and on the way Jesus asked them: Who are men saying that I am?
28 They answered: John the Baptist, risen from the dead. Others say Elijah, or one of the other prophets.
29 Jesus asked: But whom do *you* say that I am? Peter spoke up, and said back to him: You are the Messiah!
30 Then he solemnly told them not to tell anyone this.
31 He also began to teach them that the Son of Man would have to suffer greatly, and be rejected and killed by the elders of Israel, the chief priests, and the Torah teachers of the various factions. But after three days he would rise again.
32 He said this clearly [without talking in a parable], and Peter took him aside, and started rebuking him.
33 But when Jesus turned and saw the other disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying: Get behind me, Satan! You are thinking man's way, not God's!
34 And he called both the people and his disciples to him, saying: Whoever chooses to follow me must take up his cross and follow me!
35 For whoever will save his own life [by living his own way], will lose it in the end; but whoever shall lose his life for my sake, and the Gospel's, shall save it.
36 For what profit is there to gain the world but lose one's eternal soul?
37 What price will a man sell his eternal soul for?
38 So whoever shall be ashamed of me and my teachings in this [spiritually] adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of Man also be ashamed when he returns in the glory of his Father with the holy angels!

MARK CHAPTER 9

1 And he added: Truly I say to you, there are some standing here who will not see death before they glimpse the Kingdom of God come in power!
2 Six days after this, Jesus took Peter, James, and John with him up onto a high mountain by themselves--and he was transfigured before their very eyes!
3 His clothing shone white as snow--so white, in fact, that no bleached garment on earth could compare to it!
4 Then Elijah and Moses appeared and began talking with him!
5 Peter, dumbfounded, blurted out to Jesus: Rabbi, it is good for us to be here! We'll make three shelters--one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah!
6 But he really didn't know what to say because they were all terrified.
7 Then a cloud overshadowed them and a heavenly voice came forth that said: This is my beloved Son--listen to him!
8 In the next instant when they looked up, they saw no one else, for only Jesus was there with them.
9 And as they descended the mountain, he told them to say nothing of what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.
10 They did keep the secret, but the disciples kept wondering amongst themselves what "rising from the dead" meant. [For their minds were closed so they could not fully understand Jesus' words.]
11 They finally asked him: Why do the Torah teachers say Elijah must come before the Messiah?
12 Jesus answered: Truly, Elijah will return and make everything right again. And it's also written that the Son of Man will endure much suffering and be treated badly [before entering into his kingdom].
13 I also say that Elijah has already come, but they did as they wanted with him, as the Scriptures said they would.
14 Now when Jesus returned to the other disciples waiting with the crowd in the valley below, he saw some Torah teachers questioning them.
15 When the people saw Jesus, they were very amazed, and ran up to greet him.
16 But Jesus queried the Torah teachers: What are you arguing about with them?
17 A man in the crowd answered: Master, I brought my son who has a demon of muteness [and epilepsy].
18 And whenever the demon manifests, it causes him to writhe about, gnash his teeth, and fall comatose. I asked your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.
19 Jesus answered them: O faithless generation! How long must I be with you? How long must I put up with you [and your weakness of faith]? Bring the boy.
20 So they brought the boy, and when the lad saw Jesus, the demon in him caused an immediate epileptic fit, and he fell down frothing at the mouth as he convulsed.
21 Jesus asked the father: When did this first start? The man answered: Since he was a young child.
22 And it often causes him to fall into the fire, or into the waters to drown him--so if *you* can do anything, please have mercy, and help us!
23 Jesus replied: [If *I* can do anything?] If *you* can *believe*, all things are possible!
24 Then the father burst into tears, and said: Lord, I believe--help the part of me that doesn't!
25 When Jesus saw the whole crowd now running up, he rebuked the foul demon with these words: You deaf and dumb spirit, I order you to come out, and never return into him!
26 The demon screamed, and caused him to writhe all the worse. Then it was gone, and the boy seemed to be in a coma. Many even said: He is dead!
27 But Jesus grasped his hand, lifted him up, and the boy got to his feet.
28 When Jesus had returned to the house that was his headquarters, the disciples asked him privately: Why couldn't *we* cast it out?
29 He replied: One like this won't come out without intense prayer [and fasting].
30 Eventually they left the area, and Jesus hoped to discreetly travel through Galilee.
31 For on the way he taught the disciples, and told them: The Son of Man will be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him--but after they kill him, he will rise again on the third day!
32 But they did not comprehend his words, and were afraid to ask for an explanation.
33 Now after Jesus had returned to Capernaum, the disciples eventually joined him. When they entered the house he was in, Jesus asked: What were you arguing about on your way here?
34 But they hemmed and hawed and kept silent, because on the road they had been debating which of them should be considered the most important disciple.
35 So Jesus sat down and called the twelve, saying: If any man wants to be the most important, he must make himself the least of all, and the greatest servant of all.

36 Then Jesus took a child and set him before them, and taking him into his arms, said:
37 Whoever receives a child like this receives me as well. And whoever receives me, actually receives not me but [God] who sent me!
38 John now spoke up, saying: Master--we saw a man exorcising demons in your name, and we told him to stop doing that because he wasn't a part of our group.
39 But Jesus answered: Don't stop him! No man can do a miracle in my name and then just go out and denounce me.
40 Anyone who's not against us is for us!
41 And truly, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will in no way lose his reward.
42 But whoever causes one of the little ones who believes in me to stumble--well, it would be better if an [anchor] were tied to his neck, and he was thrown into the sea to drown.
43 So if your hand causes you to sin--cut it off! It's better to enter into life maimed, than to have two good hands and be cast into hell--and the fire that shall never quenched.
44 Where [--as you've heard in the legends of sinners who are eaten by maggots every day, over and over again--] the maggots do not die, nor does the fire go out!
45 So if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off! It's better to enter into life a cripple, than to have two good legs and be cast into eternal hellfire,
46 Where the maggots [of the tormented] do not die, and the fire does not go out!
47 Likewise, if your eye makes you to sin--pluck it out! Better to enter the Kingdom of God with one eye, than to have two good eyes, and be cast into hell's fire,
48 Where the maggots of the lost do not die, and the fire does not go out!
49 For the fire of God will purify everyone, even as salt draws out the lifeblood from a sacrificial offering. [Thus, the life from you will be drawn out until you have died to yourselves and become a pure sacrifice in God's eyes, while the wicked will be consumed.]
50 Now salt is a good thing, but what can be done with it if the salt loses its flavor? Keep your flavor pure, and live in peace with each other [instead of arguing over who is the most important].

MARK CHAPTER 10

1 Jesus then arose and left the area, arriving at the border of Judea at the farther side of Jordan. The people, as usual, came to him; and as he always did, Jesus reiterated his doctrines to them.
2 Eventually the Pharisees came up, hoping to trick him. They asked: Do you agree that the Law allows a man to divorce his wife if he deems it necessary?
3 Jesus answered: What is your understanding of what Moses ordered about divorce?
4 The Pharisees replied: Moses allowed a man to write a Bill of Divorce, and to put her away.
5 Yes, Jesus agreed, he said that--but he wrote it into the Law because of your hard and stubborn hearts.
6 From the beginning of time [and the Garden of Eden, divorce was never a part of God's plan, and] *He created man as male and female*.
7 *That's why a man shall leave his father and mother, and become one with his wife;*
8 *And they shall no longer be two separate people, but one flesh.*
9 So what God has joined together, man must not tear apart.
10 When Jesus entered back into a house he was staying at, the disciples asked him for more clarification on the matter of divorce.
11 He told them: A man who divorces his wife and marries another person commits adultery against his original wife.
12 Likewise, if a woman [--Herodias, for example--] divorces her husband and marries another, *she* commits adultery.
13 Now some mothers brought small children to Jesus so he would lay hands on them [and bless them], but the disciples were offended at this, and rebuked them.
14 When Jesus realized this, he was angry at them, and said: You let the little children come to me, and don't stop them--for the Kingdom of God is made up of ones just like them!
15 And I tell you truly, whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God just like a little child will never enter it!
16 Then Jesus took the children into his arms, laid hands on them, and blessed them.
17 Now later, when he was leaving the area, a man ran up the road and kneeled, asking: Good Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?
18 Jesus replied: Why call any man "Good" when only *God* is good?
19 However, you know the commandments: Don't commit adultery; Don't kill; Don't [kidnap or rob]; Don't lie about others; Don't cheat; Honor, and take care of your parents.
20 The man answered, and said: Master, I have done all these things from my youth.
21 Jesus looked back, and his heart went out to him in love. He said: You only lack one thing: Go, sell whatever you have, give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, take up the cross, and follow me!
22 The man was sad at hearing this, and left with his head hung low, for he had great possessions.
23 Jesus looked around, then said to the disciples: Only with difficulty will people with riches enter into the Kingdom of God.
24 The disciples [--who, like everyone, thought prosperity was a sign of God's favor--] were amazed at hearing this. Jesus reiterated: Children, it is very hard for those who trust in wealth to enter into the Kingdom of God!
25 It is easier for a rope to pass through the eye of a needle than it is for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God.
26 Now the disciples were *really* shocked, and said among themselves: Who can be saved then?!
27 Jesus, looking back to them, said: With men, it is impossible, but not with God--for with God, *anything* is possible!
28 Peter began saying: Look at us…we have left all, and followed you--
29 Jesus spoke up: Truly I tell you, there is no man who has forsaken his house, his brothers, his sisters, his parents, his wife, or even his children or lands for my sake and that of the Gospel,
30 Who will not receive back, in *this* lifetime, a hundredfold houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and lands--along with persecution--and in the Messianic Age eternal life as well!
31 But many who are most important in the here-and-now will be the lowest-of-the-low then; and those least esteemed now will be the most important then!
32 Now as they were going along the road to Jerusalem with Jesus leading the way, a feeling of unnatural dread and concern came upon the disciples. So Jesus took the twelve aside and began to elaborate on what was ahead of him.
33 He said: We are near Jerusalem now, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief Sadducee priests and the Torah teachers. They will condemn him to death, and hand him over to the Gentiles.
34 The Gentiles will then mock him, whip him, and spit upon him before killing him--but on the third day he will rise again.

35 [Despite the gravity of what lay ahead,] James and John, Zebedee's sons, came up to Jesus, and said: Master, we want you to agree to do whatever we ask of you.
36 Jesus replied: And just what is it that you two want me to do for you?
37 They responded: Grant that the two of us can sit at your right and left hands [as the highest officials in your glorious Kingdom].
38 But Jesus replied: Do you have any idea what you're asking?! [Do you know the price that comes with that?!] Can you drink from the cup I must drink from, and endure the baptism I must undergo?!
39 They said: We can! Then Jesus replied: Well, you *will* drink from that cup, and you *will* share the baptism I must undergo.
40 But to sit on my right or left hand is not mine to give, but [God has in mind those who will occupy those positions].
41 When word made its way back to the other ten about this, they started to get furious at James and John.
42 But Jesus summoned the disciples, and said to them: You know that among the Gentiles, everyone tries to lord it over everyone else; and the higher you climb, the more you trod upon those beneath you, treating them as your servants.
43 [As I said before:] Among you, it must not be that way! Whoever wants to be important must be servant to the others.
44 And the most important of you must be the greatest slave of all.
45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve others, and give his life to ransom many.
46 Now they came to Jericho, and as he departed with the disciples, a blind man, the son of Timaeus, sat by the side of the road, begging.
47 When he asked what the commotion was, and heard that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by, he cried out: Jesus, Son of David--have mercy on me!
48 Many of the crowd told him to be still, but he shouted out all the louder: You who are the Son of David, have mercy on me!
49 Jesus heard, and halted. Then he commanded that the man be brought up to him. They ran, and told bar Timaeus: This is your day--get up, for Jesus is calling you!
50 So bar Timaeus cast away his cloak, and arose. Then he stumbled toward Jesus.
51 Jesus said to him: What is it that I can do for you? Blind bar Timaeus answered: Great Rabbi--let me receive my sight!
52 Jesus responded: Go your way--your faith has made you whole! And immediately, bar Timaeus received his sight and followed down the road behind Jesus.

MARK CHAPTER 11

1 When they approached Jerusalem and arrived at the villages of Bethany and Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent out two disciples,
2 Saying to them: Go into the village there, and as soon as you enter it you will find a young donkey upon which no man has ever sat. Untie it, and bring it back here.
3 If anyone asks, "Why are you doing that?," just say: "The Lord has need of him, and will send him right back here."
4 So the two went, and it happened just as Jesus said: A donkey was tied up next to the door of a house at the crossroads, and they untied it.
5 Sure enough, some who were standing around [--thinking they were thieves--] demanded to know: What do you think you're doing, untying that donkey?!
6 The disciples answered as Jesus had told them, and the men let them go.
7 So they brought the donkey to Jesus and spread their cloaks upon its back, and Jesus sat upon it.
8 Many of the crowd began to lay their cloaks on the road before the beast, while others cut down tree branches and laid them down on the road as well.
9 And those who went on ahead of Jesus, and the crowd behind, started shouting: Save now! *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!*
10 Blessed be the Kingdom of our father David that the Lord is bringing forth! Save now, O God in the highest heaven!
11 And Jesus entered Jerusalem and made his way up to the Temple [where he assessed the practices there]. Then, it being near dusk, he and the twelve returned to Bethany.
12 Now the next morning, when he was returning to the city from Bethany, Jesus was hungry.
13 He saw a nice-looking fig tree in the distance, and made his way over to it, hoping to find some figs. But when he got to it, there was nothing but leaves on it, for harvest time hadn't come yet [--the fig tree only *looked* like it might have fruit].
14 In response to this, Jesus answered: May no man ever eat fruit off of you again! And his disciples heard him say this.
15 After this, they re-entered Jerusalem. Jesus then went up to the Temple and began to throw out those in the Court of Gentiles who did business there. He also overturned the tables of the money-changers and the chairs of the sacrificial dove-sellers [who should not have been sitting in that court of the Temple].
16 He also wouldn't allow people to carry any wares for sale on the Temple grounds.
17 And he taught, saying: Is it not written: **My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer**? But you have made it into a den of thieves!
18 The Torah teachers and the chief Sadducee priests heard him say this, and they yearned to find some way to kill him--but they were afraid to take action because the multitudes were enraptured by his words and teachings.
19 When evening was come, Jesus left the city.
20 Now the next morning, when they were going back to Jerusalem, the disciples saw the fig tree from the day before was dried up from its roots.
21 Peter, remembering Jesus' words, said: Rabbi,
look--the fig tree you cursed has dried up, and died!
22 Jesus' reply to this was: Have faith in God!
23 For truly I tell you that whoever says to this mountain, "Get up, and be cast into the sea"--without doubting in his heart, but believing what he says shall happen--will have whatever he has asked for!
24 I thus say to you, whatever things you desire when you pray, believe you already have them, and you shall!
25 And when you stand praying, forgive if you have a grudge against someone so your Father in heaven can forgive your own trespasses!
26 But if you don't forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your wrongdoing!
27 They returned to Jerusalem and the Temple, and this time as Jesus walked through it the chief priests, the Torah teachers, and the elders of the city accosted him.
28 They said: By what authority do you presume to come in and do all these things, and who gave you that authority?!
29 Jesus replied to them: I'll ask one question of you, and if you answer me, I will tell you by what authority *I* am doing these things!
30 John's baptism: Was it given him from heaven, or was it his own invention? Answer that.
31 The authorities talked it over, and concluded: If we say heaven gave it to him, he'll ask: "Then why didn't you believe him?"
32 But if we say he made it up on his own, who knows what the crowd will do, seeing they count him as a true prophet?

33 So they answered by saying: We can't tell. Jesus replied: Then I will not tell you by what authority *I* do these things!

MARK CHAPTER 12

1 Jesus began to preach in parables once again, saying: A man once planted a vineyard, made a fence around it, dug a winepress, erected a guard tower, and then handed it over to some sharecroppers to run while he left for a faraway country.
2 When harvest time arrived, he sent a servant to the sharecroppers to collect his share of the vineyard's fruits.
3 But the sharecroppers grabbed hold of him, beat him, and ran him out of the vineyard empty-handed.
4 The man sent another servant who had rocks thrown at him, and had to leave with a bad head wound after being treated shamefully.
5 He sent a third, and this one they killed. They beat or killed many other servants sent to them as well.
6 At the end, he sent his one well-beloved son to them, saying to himself: "Surely, they'll respect my own son!"
7 But the sharecroppers said to each other: "Here is the man's heir--let's kill him, and then the vineyard will be ours forever!"
8 So they took the son, killed him, and then threw his body out of the vineyard.
9 What would you expect the lord of the vineyard to do to these evil men? He will come and destroy them, and hand over the vineyard they wanted to keep for themselves to others [who are worthy].
10 Now: Have you ever read the Scripture that says, **The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner:**
11 **This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes**?
12 [The group knew this parable was directed straight at them, and they wanted to arrest Jesus on the spot.] But they feared the people so they went away to bide their time.
13 They later sent a select group of [Shammaiite] Pharisees with some of the Herodian priests, hoping to outsmart Jesus and catch him in his own words.
14 When the group arrived, they said to Jesus: Teacher--we know you're sincere, and that you could care less about the opinion of man, but stand up for the truth of God regardless of the consequences. Now we have a question: Does the Law of Moses permit paying taxes to Caesar [and thus supporting the empire that oppresses the nation], or not?
15 Should we pay, or should we not pay? Jesus, however, knew their hypocrisy, and said: Why do you try to trick me? Show me a coin of the tribute!
16 They sent someone for a denarius, and Jesus asked them: Whose image and inscription is on this coin? They replied: Caesar's.
17 Jesus responded by saying: Then give to Caesar what is Caesar's, but give to God what is God's! And they were astonished by the wisdom of his answer.
18 Then some Sadducee priests--who deny there is a resurrection of the dead--took a crack at him, saying:
19 Teacher--Moses wrote that if a man dies childless, his brother must marry his wife, and produce an heir for him.
20 Now there were seven brothers, and the first married a woman, and died childless.
21 The second then married her, and also died. The third married her, and died too.
22 Eventually, all seven married the woman and died childless, and finally she also died.
23 Now--in the resurrection, whose wife would she be, since all seven married her?
24 Jesus replied by saying: Don't you fall into error from the start since you don't even know or understand the Scriptures, or the power of God on top of that?!
25 When people rise from the dead in the resurrection, they will neither marry, nor be given in marriage, but will be like the angels in heaven.
26 Now as regards your error over whether men [have immortal souls, and whether or not they] will rise in resurrection: Haven't you read in the Torah how God spoke to Moses in the bush, saying, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"?
27 [Not "I *was* the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."] So God is the God of those who still live and worship him even in the grave, rather than a God of those who have gone to the grave and forever lost all consciousness. Thus, you greatly err in your theology.
28 One of the [Hillelite] Torah teachers came up, and overhearing the discussion, knew Jesus had answered them brilliantly, so he asked him: What do you believe is the most important command in the Law?
29 Jesus answered: The first, and most critical, of all the commandments is: **Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:**
30 **And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.** This is the first commandment given.
31 The second is like it: **Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.** There are no other commandments more important than these.
32 [Hillel had a similar teaching, and] the Torah teacher responded: Master, you have spoken well, for there is only one God, and no others.
33 And to love Him with all one's being and understanding, along with loving one's neighbor as himself, is more important than any burnt offerings or sin sacrifices!
34 When Jesus saw the man displayed wisdom in his statement, he told him: You are close to the Kingdom of God. After this, none of Jesus' enemies dared try to outsmart him.
35 But while Jesus was teaching in the Temple courts, he asked: Why do the Torah teachers say the Messiah is the son of *David* [and thus in an inferior position to him]?
36 For the Holy Spirit inspired David to write in the Psalms: **The LORD said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.**
37 David thus calls the Messiah his own Lord, so how can he be nothing more than *his* descendant and heir? [The common people delighted at hearing new teachings and revelations like this.]
38 And he warned them in his doctrine: Beware of Torah teachers who love to walk around in richly embroidered prayer shawls with their long commandment threads, and to be greeted in the marketplaces with deference to their positions,
39 And love the best seats in the synagogues, and the best seats at feasts,
40 Yet turn widows out into the streets where they make long, hypocritical public prayers. In hell, these men will have a greater punishment than the worst sinners!
41 Jesus then took a place near the collection boxes in the court, and watched people casting their money in. Many rich people deposited great amounts.
42 In time, a poor widow came up and deposited two copper coins.
43 Jesus called the disciples, and said: Truly I say to you, this poor widow gave more than any of the others,
44 For they gave from their surplus [after their own needs were met], while she gave all that she owned!

MARK CHAPTER 13

1 As Jesus exited the Temple grounds, one of his disciples excitedly

said: Master--look what magnificent huge stones and architecture are here!
2 Jesus replied: You see these great buildings? I tell you there will not be so much as two bricks left cemented together that will not be thrown down!
3 Later, as Jesus sat upon the Mount of Olives in the shadow of the great Temple, Peter and Andrew, and James and John, came privately to him and asked:
4 Tell us when these things will happen to the Temple. And what will be the signs that it is approaching fulfillment?
5 Jesus began to say in response: Beware, lest someone deceive you.
6 For between now and then, many will come, usurping my position, and saying, "I am the Messiah." Many will be deceived by them.
7 And when you hear of impending war or rumors of war, don't be worried. Such things must happen, but the end of the Age will not come yet.
8 Nation will indeed rise against nation, and race will battle race, and there will be great earthquakes and famines. These will be the start of the *Birthpangs of the Messiah*.
9 But watch out for yourselves, for you will be tried before religious courts, and they will beat you in the synagogues. You will also be taken before rulers and kings because of your stand for me; and then you will testify of me to them.
10 [But before the end,] the Gospel must be preached to all people.
11 And when the time comes that they haul you before these tribunals, don't plan what you're going to say beforehand. The Holy Spirit will give you the words to respond with in the hour you need them, and it will be He, not you, who speaks.
12 In the times to come, brother will betray brother to death, as will the father betray his son, and the children their parents, causing them to be put to death.
13 You will be hated by all men for your commitment to me, but those who endure the persecution to the end will be saved!
14 But note: When you see the *Abomination of Desolation* prophesied of by Daniel the prophet standing [in the Holy of Holies], let those in Judea flee to the mountains.
15 Let him on the housetop run for the hills without even stopping long enough to grab anything from his house.
16 Let him in the field not even go back to grab his cloak before fleeing.
17 And woe to pregnant women and nursing mothers in those days!
18 And keep praying that the time of your flight does not come in the cold of winter.
19 For in those days shall be tribulation such as has never been seen before, nor will be seen again.
20 And unless God cuts those days short, everyone will die. But God will intervene on behalf of His elect people, and the days of tribulation will be cut short.
21 In those days if any man says, "Look--the Messiah is in this place or that," don't believe him!
22 For false messiahs and false prophets will arise and produce [false] miracles to deceive many, including God's elect if that were possible.
23 But stay on guard, because I have warned you about this.
24 In those days, at the climax of the tribulation, the sun will grow dark and the moon will give no light.
25 And the stars in the sky will fall [as the demonic powers in the heavens are cast down to perdition].
26 Then all will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.
27 And he shall send forth his angels to gather his elect people from every part of creation, from the four corners of the earth, to the four corners of heaven.
28 Learn a parable from the fig tree: When its branches are supple and sprout leaves, you know summer is near.
29 In like manner, when you see these things come to pass, know that the culmination of this Age, and the start of the Messianic Age, is at hand.
30 I assure you that the generation alive to see each of these things will not vanish before it sees the culmination of those things come to pass.
31 The cosmos and the earth will pass away, but what I say never will!
32 But *the Day and the Hour* [--the *Rosh Hashanah*--] that all these things will happen, no one, including the angels, knows; but the Father alone. Even I do not know it.
33 So stay in prayer, remaining faithful and on watch--because you don't know when that time will be.
34 For the Son of Man is like a man who went on a long journey, leaving his holdings in care of his servants, and commanding the gatekeeper to keep watch.
35 So [you gatekeepers] keep yourselves ready, for you don't know when your Master will return to call you to account for what you've done with what he's left in your possession. He may come at dusk, at midnight, at dawn, or in the morning!
36 You don't want him to arrive without warning and find you asleep at your post!
37 So what I say to one, I say to all--watch [and be faithful]!

MARK CHAPTER 14

1 After two days was the Feast of Passover, and then Unleavened Bread. As this day approached, the chief Sadducee priests and the Torah teachers sought to find a way to trick Jesus into being taken into custody so they could kill him.
2 But they said: Not on the Passover itself, lest the crowds rise up.
3 Now as Jesus was in Bethany eating dinner at the house of Simon the Leper [father of Judas], a woman with an alabaster vial filled with precious perfumed ointment came in and broke the vial, pouring its contents upon Jesus' head.
4 Some present were offended at the act, and asked: Why was this vial of ointment wasted like this?
5 It could have been sold for nearly a year's wages that could have been given to the poor! And they grumbled against her.
6 But Jesus said: Leave her be! Why do you bother her? She has performed a righteous act on me.
7 The poor will always be there for you to help, but you will not always have me.
8 She has done what she could in the time remaining, for she has anointed my body for burial.
9 I want you to know that wherever in the world this Gospel is preached, the tale of what she did will be preached too as a memorial of her and what she did.
10 Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went to the chief Sadducee priests, offering to betray Jesus to them.
11 When he made the offer they were delighted, and offered him money in return. So from that point, he began looking for the best way to deliver Jesus into their hands.
12 On the eve of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lambs were slain, the disciples asked Jesus: Where do you want us to make preparations so you can eat the Passover meal?
13 And he sent out two disciples, telling them: Go into Jerusalem, [and you'll spot something unusual: A man [--rather than a woman--] carrying a pitcher of water. Follow him to the house he goes to.

14 Then seek out the owner of the house, and say to him: "The Master says, 'Where is the guest chamber where I can eat the Passover with my disciples?'"
15 He will show you a large room on an upper floor furnished and ready. Prepare our Passover there.
16 So the disciples went into Jerusalem and found things as Jesus had told them. Then they prepared for the Passover Festival.
17 Jesus arrived that evening with the twelve disciples.
18 As they reclined and ate, Jesus said: I assure you that one of you eating with me tonight will betray me.
19 The disciples were all filled with sorrow, and began asking in turn: Is it I? Is it me? Even [Judas] asked: Is it I?
20 Jesus' reply was: It is one of you twelve who dip in the dish with me.
21 And sure enough, the Son of Man will go on to what is prophesied about him in the Scriptures, but woe to the one who is sending him down that road! It would be good for that man if he had never been born!
22 As they ate the meal, Jesus took unleavened bread, blessed God, and handed it out, saying: Take and eat this. This is my body.
23 Then he took the cup of wine, and after giving thanks to God, he passed it around and they all drank from it.
24 He said: This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.
25 I assure you that I will never drink any fruit of the vine again until the day I drink it new in the Kingdom of God!
26 After they had sung one of the Hymns of Ascent, they made their way to the Mount of Olives.
27 As they went, Jesus said to them: All of you will [stumble in your faith and abandon me tonight], for it is written: **I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.**
28 But after I rise, I will go and wait for you in Galilee.
29 Peter, however, assured him: Even if everyone else here stumbles [and abandons you]--*I* won't!
30 Jesus' reply was: I assure you that this day, even this very night, before the "rooster" crows twice--you will deny even knowing me, not just once, but three times!
31 But Peter denied it all the more vehemently, declaring: If I have to die with you, I will not deny you in any way! The other disciples said likewise.
32 Eventually they came to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to the disciples: Sit here, while I go pray.
33 And he took Peter, James, and John with him a few yards away. But as he went, a feeling of utter dread and sorrow came upon him.
34 Jesus told them: My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, almost to the point of death. Wait here, and keep watch.
35 Jesus went forward a few steps, and fell prostrate upon the ground, praying that what lay ahead could be avoided if possible.
36 He prayed: Abba Father, all things are possible for You...take this cup away from me--yet not my will, but Yours be done.
37 After a while, he returned to find everyone asleep. So he awakened Peter, and said: Shimon--are you asleep?! Could you not stay on watch for just one hour?!
38 Stay alert and pray, lest you enter into temptation. Your spirit is willing, but your flesh is weak [and may be your downfall].
39 And he went back, praying the same words as before.
40 When he returned, the disciples were once more asleep, unable to keep their eyes open, and they had no good answer as to why they could not stay awake.
41 When this happened a third time, Jesus said: Fine, sleep on, and rest. Enough is enough--the hour is come. Behold, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.
42 Get up! Let's go--my betrayer has come!
43 Now while he was speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived at the head of a crowd armed with swords and clubs that had been sent by the Sadducees, the Torah teachers, and the city elders.
44 Earlier, the betrayer had told them to look for the sign he would give them: The one I give the customary kiss of greeting to is Jesus. Take him into custody, and you'll be able to lead him away in safety!
45 As soon as he arrived, Judas went over to Jesus, calling out: Rabbi! Rabbi! Then he gave him a kiss of greeting.
46 The others then rushed up and took Jesus into custody.
47 Now one of the disciples [--trying to help Jesus--] drew a sword and cut the ear off a man in the crowd who happened to be a servant of the High Priest.
48 [Before things could escalate,] Jesus said: Why do you come out, armed to the teeth, like you're apprehending some bandit?
49 You saw me in the Temple each day preaching, and you didn't touch me then--but the Scriptures must be fulfilled, mustn't they?
50 At this, the disciples all scattered and ran for their lives.
51 Now a young man [--John Mark, who was present in the house during their Passover--] had slipped out to follow and see what would happen, but he was clad only in a fine linen sheet. Some of the young men in the crowd spotted him and tried to catch him,
52 But he managed to slip from their grasp, leaving the sheet in their hands as he ran away naked.
53 The others, meanwhile, led Jesus to the palace of the High Priest where all chief priests, the key city elders, and the Torah teachers were gathered.
54 Peter was following along in the distance, and he managed to slip into the palace of the High Priest. He then mingled with some of the servants in the courtyard, warming himself at a bright bonfire.
55 Meanwhile, the chief Sadducee priests and their [city] Sanhedrin sought for two witnesses who could say something giving them leave to kill Jesus, but found none.
56 All sorts of people spoke lies against him, but they couldn't find two who could get their stories straight.
57 Finally, a couple of men testified falsely against Jesus, saying:
58 We heard him say: "I will destroy this Temple made by human hands, and within three days will erect another built without human hands"!
59 But even these didn't say exactly the same thing.
60 Finally, the High Priest stood up in the midst of the gathering and asked Jesus: Do you have nothing to say? What are all these things you're being accused of by the people?
61 But Jesus kept silent, and finally the High Priest demanded: Are you the Messiah, Son of the Blessed?!
62 And Jesus said: I AM! And you all will see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of Power, and coming in the clouds of heaven!
63 Then the High Priest [broke the Law of Moses, and] rent his clothing. He said: What need is there of more witnesses?
64 You all heard him [blasphemously apply the name of God to himself], so what is your judgment? So they held a quick vote, and all of them voted Jesus guilty, and deserving of death.
65 Some now began to spit on Jesus, and blindfolded him so he couldn't see while they slapped him. They shouted out: Prophesy [who it was that struck you]! The servants also slapped him in the face with their palms.
66 Now as Peter was in the courtyard below the palace, one of the female servants of the High Priest came along.
67 She noticed Peter warming himself at the fire, and fixed her gaze at him, saying: You were with Jesus of Nazareth too!
68 But he immediately denied it, saying: I have no idea what you could possibly be talking about! Then he began to walk toward the gate leading outside to the street as the "rooster" crowed.

69 Another female servant then saw him and cried out to those there: This is one of them!
70 Again, Peter denied it [--this time, with an oath]. But after a while, others standing there said: You *must* be one of them--you even have a Galilean accent!
71 Then Peter began cursing and swearing, stating: I don't know that man you're talking about!
72 Now the "rooster" cried out again, and Peter recalled Jesus telling him: "Before the 'rooster' crows twice--you will deny even knowing me, not just once, but three times!" When he remembered that, he went out and wept bitterly.

MARK CHAPTER 15

1 As soon as dawn broke, the chief Sadducee priests consulted with the religious leaders, the Torah teachers, and the entire [city] Sanhedrin. Then they bound Jesus and sent him to the Roman governor Pilate.
2 When he met him, Pilate asked: Are you, "The King of the Jews"? Jesus' response was: You are saying that I am [by what you are doing].
3 The chief Sadducee priests then made numerous accusations against Jesus, but he remained silent.
4 Pilate again spoke to Jesus, saying: Have you nothing to say at all? Look how many charges they're bringing against you!
5 But still Jesus kept silent, and Pilate was amazed at this.
6 Now at the Feasts [as a gesture of goodwill,] the governor would release a condemned criminal of their choice to the people.
7 In custody was a violent, murderous revolutionary named bar Abbas, who with his gang had been apprehended and now awaited execution.
8 The crowd now began calling for Pilate to follow the custom, and release one man [--namely, this same bar Abbas].
9 But Pilate answered: Do you want me to release "The King of the Jews" to you?
10 For Pilate knew full well that the chief Sadducee priests had delivered Jesus solely out of envy.
11 But those chief priests moved the crowd to holler for bar Abbas instead.
12 So Pilate answered again: Then what do you want me to do with the one you call "The King of the Jews"?
13 The crowd screamed out again: Crucify him!
14 Pilate responded: Why? For what evil that he has done? But they shouted out all the louder: Crucify him!
15 And so Pilate--desiring to placate the people--gave in to the crowd, and released bar Abbas to them. Then, after flogging Jesus, he ordered him to be crucified.
16 The legionnaires now led Jesus into the Praetorium hall and called their fellow soldiers out to see the spectacle.
17 They threw a purple cloak upon his back, wove together a crown of thorns, then placed it upon his head,
18 And began mockingly shouting: Hail, King of the Jews!
19 And they beat him with a reed stick, and spat upon him, and mockingly got on their knees in obeisance to him.
20 When they tired of this mocking, they took back the cloak and dressed him back in his own robe. Then they led him out to be crucified.
21 As they were going, a man named Simon of Cyrene was coming from the country into Jerusalem for the Festival. This Simon, who was father to Alexander and Rufus, was forced by the Romans to help Jesus bear his cross.
22 And they brought Jesus to a place called Golgotha, which means *Place of the Skull* [*of Adam*].
23 There, they offered him some wine drugged with myrrh to drink, but he refused it.
24 When they crucified Jesus, they divided his clothing and diced to see who would get to choose what.
25 It was 9 AM when all this happened.
26 And above Jesus' head on the cross was an inscription that read: THE KING OF THE JEWS.
27 Crucified on both sides of Jesus were also two thieves.
28 This fulfilled a prophecy that said: **And he was numbered with the transgressors**.
29 Those who passed by mocked Jesus, saying: So, you who were going to destroy the Temple, and rebuild it in three days--
30 Save yourself, and come down off that cross!
31 Likewise, the key Sadducee priests and Torah teachers mockingly said among themselves: He saved others, but he can't save himself!
32 Let us see the "Messiah and King of Israel" come down now from that cross, and we'll believe! The two thieves being crucified also mocked him like this.
33 Now when noon came, a great darkness fell over all the land until 3 PM [when the High Priest sacrificed the Passover lamb].
34 At 3 PM, Jesus cried out on a loud voice in the Aramaic language, quoting a Psalm, and saying: **My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?**
35 [Because the words "My God" and the name of Elijah in Aramaic are both pronounced "Eli,"] some said: Look--he's calling for Elijah!
36 Someone ran off and soaked a sponge with non-kosher vinegar wine, placed the sponge on a stick, and then lifted it up to Jesus to drink. Others said: Leave him alone, and let's see if Elijah comes to take him down from that cross!
37 Jesus then cried out with a loud voice, and expired.
38 At the same instant, the curtain sealing off the Holy of Holies was ripped apart from top to bottom!
39 When a centurion present saw how Jesus cried out and yielded his spirit up to death, he noted: This man truly *was* the Son of God!
40 Now some female followers of Jesus were watching the scene from a distance. They included Mary of Magdala, and Mary the mother of James the younger, Joses, and Salome.
41 These women followers had ministered to Jesus in Galilee, and many other women had come with them to Jerusalem.
42 Now as evening drew near, since it was the preparation for the Sabbath,
43 Joseph of Arimathaea, a just man on the Great Sanhedrin who also was looking for the Kingdom of God to come, boldly went before Pilate and asked to be given Jesus' body.
44 Pilate was amazed that Jesus was already dead, so he summoned the centurion in charge of the crucifixion to verify the fact that Jesus had been dead for a while.
45 When the officer confirmed it, he allowed Joseph to take the body.
46 So Joseph took a fine linen shroud, took him down, wrapped Jesus in it, and placed him in a tomb hewn out of a rocky outcrop. He then had a large stone rolled in front of the opening to seal it.
47 And Mary of Magdala and Mary the mother of Joses observed where he was laid to rest in a tomb.

MARK CHAPTER 16

1 After the Sabbath was over, Mary of Magdala, and Mary the mother of James and Salome, brought spices to cover the body of Jesus.
2 At sunrise on Sunday morning, they came to the tomb.
3 They were wondering among themselves: Who will roll the stone away for us from the entrance of the tomb?

4 But when they came to the tomb and looked, they found the very large stone was already rolled aside.
5 The women entered into the tomb and there saw what looked like a young man clothed in a long white garment sitting on the right side of where the body had lain--and they were terrified!
6 But he said: Stop cringing in fear. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen, and is not here! See--this was where they laid him.
7 But go your way, and tell his disciples, including Peter, that he has gone to Galilee, and is waiting for them there--and there they will see him as he said earlier.
8 Yet the women fled from the tomb in terror and amazement, and said nothing to anyone because of their fear.
9 Now when Jesus had risen early Sunday, he first appeared to Mary of Magdala, who had once been totally possessed by seven demons he had cast out.
10 This same Mary went, and told the disciples, who were mourning Jesus' death with tears.
11 But though she swore she had seen Jesus alive, the disciples did not believe her.
12 After this, Jesus appeared in another form to two of his followers as they were walking in the country.
13 They came and reported this to the disciples, but they wouldn't believe them either.
14 Finally, Jesus appeared to the eleven as they were having dinner, and he gave them a severe tongue lashing for their hardness of heart in refusing to believe those who had seen him alive after his resurrection.
15 Then he said: As you go forth into the world, preach the Gospel to every creature.
16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned.
17 And these signs will follow those who have believed: As my representatives and followers, they will cast out devils; they will speak with new tongues;
18 They will handle snakes with impunity; if they drink anything dangerous, it will not--and I mean *not*--harm them; and they will lay hands on the sick, and the sick shall recover.
19 After the Lord had spoken to them, he was received up into heaven and sat down at God's right hand.
20 And the disciples went out and preached everywhere, the Lord's power being with them, and the Message was confirmed by many signs following. Amen.

LUKE

LUKE CHAPTER 1

1 Since many have attempted to write an account of the things that we certainly believe,
2 Through the stories passed down to us by those who were eyewitnesses from the beginning and ministers of the Message,
3 I also thought it a good idea that, since my knowledge of the events comes from exhaustive research of the whole story, beginning to end, I write you this account, most excellent Theophilus,
4 So you too can know the absolute truth of the things you've been taught.
5 In the days of Herod the Great, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zacharias, who was one of the priests in the division of Abijah [established by David]. Zacharias' wife Elizabeth was descended from Aaron [the first High Priest].
6 Now these two were highly religious and devoted before God, obeying all of the Torah in a blameless manner.
7 Even so, they had no children, for Elizabeth was barren, and now they were both very old.
8 And it came to pass that during one of the two times a year that Zacharias was called upon to serve at the Temple with the other priests of the division of Abijah,
9 For the first time in his life, when they enacted the ritual to cast lots to determine which priest would have the honor of going into the Temple of the Lord and burning incense before the Holy of Holies, it fell to him.
10 At the appointed time, while he was inside burning incense, the Temple courts outside were filled with a multitude of people praying.
11 As he was doing this, an angel of the Lord appeared, standing to the right of the altar of incense!
12 When Zacharias saw him, he was stunned, and great fear fell upon him.
13 But the angel said: Don't be afraid, Zacharias! Your prayer [for a son] has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear a son whom you are to name John [Yochannon].
14 You will have great joy and gladness at this, and many will rejoice at his birth.
15 This child will be great in the Lord's sight [and will be consecrated to God as a Nazirite from his birth]. He must never drink wine or strong drink; and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb.
16 [He will bring revival to the children of Israel, and turn many to the Lord their God.]
17 He will go before Him, walking in the spirit and power of Elijah to: **turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord**.
18 Zacharias replied to the angel: How do I know this is true? I am an old man, and my wife too is getting on in years.
19 The angel then answered: I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and who was sent to speak to you and give you these glad tidings.
20 Because you did not believe my words that will be fulfilled in the due course of time, you will be made [deaf and] dumb, unable to speak!
21 Now while this was going on, the people waited for Zacharias, and couldn't understand why he was taking so long in the Temple [so they repeated their prayer over and over again until he came out].
22 When he finally *did* emerge, he could not speak [and bless the people]--he could only make hand signs--and they knew he must have had some sort of vision in the Temple. After this, he remained unable to speak.
23 Now when his period of service was over, he went home to his wife.
24 Elizabeth then conceived, and hid herself for five months. And she said,
25 "The Lord has been good and merciful to me to look upon me in my old age, and take away the disgrace of being childless!"
26 Now in the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, the same angel Gabriel was sent by God to the village of Nazareth in Galilee,
27 To a young virgin who was engaged to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The young woman's name was Miriam [meaning Rebel].
28 The angel came to her, and said: Greetings, you who have been greatly graced! The Lord is with you! Blessed are you among women!
29 When Miriam saw the angel, she was troubled and perplexed, wondering what sort of greeting this was.
30 But the angel said to her: Don't be afraid, Miriam--for you have found favor with God!
31 You are going to become pregnant and give birth to a son whom you will name Jesus [Yeshua].
32 He will be a great man, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David!
33 He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will never have an end!
34 Then Miriam asked: How can such a thing happen since I am a virgin?
35 The angel answered: The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you. For this reason, the holy child born of you will be called the *Son of God*.
36 Your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month of a pregnancy for a woman who was called "barren."
37 For no command or decree of God is without power!
38 And Miriam replied: Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Let it happen as you have said. The angel then departed from her.
39 Miriam left her home around then, and speedily made her way to the hill country of Judea and the village where Elizabeth lived.
40 Upon entering Zacharias' home, she called out a greeting to Elizabeth.
41 When Elizabeth heard the sound of her voice, the baby leapt for joy in her womb, and the Holy Spirit filled her, causing her to prophesy.
42 She cried out: Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!
43 And why am I so honored that the mother of my Lord has come to me?
44 For as soon as I heard your voice and greeting, the baby inside me leapt for joy!
45 Blessed is she who believed what the Lord told her, for what she has believed will come to pass!
46 And Miriam exclaimed: My soul exalts the Lord!
47 And my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!
48 For He has regarded the humble state of His handmaid--for from this point, all generations will call me blessed!
49 For the Mighty One has done great things to me, and **Holy is His name**!
50 **His mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation**.

51 His mighty arm has scattered those who are arrogant in their hearts' intentions.
52 He has thrown down the mighty from their thrones and replaced them with the humble.
53 He has filled the starving with delicacies and the rich have been turned away hungry.
54 He has come to the rescue of His servant Israel, remembering the promise He made out of mercy for us,
55 The promise He made to our ancestors, and Abraham, and his descendants forever!
56 After this, Miriam remained with Elizabeth for around three more months. Then she went back home.
57 Now Elizabeth's time had come, and she delivered a son.
58 All her neighbors and relatives heard of the great mercy God had shown her by this miracle, and they rejoiced with her.
59 And after eight days, according to custom, they came to circumcise the child and give him a name. They started to call him Zacharias, after his father.
60 But Elizabeth said: No--name him John!
61 They answered back: But there are none of your relatives [or ancestors] with that name.
62 So they made signs to [the deaf] Zacharias, trying to get him to communicate what the child should be named.
63 Zacharias then gestured for a writing tablet, and when given one wrote: *His name is John*. And everyone was amazed.
64 Then his affliction immediately left him, and Zacharias opened his mouth to praise God.
65 And a great fear came about everyone in the area, and word of these events circulated about all the Judean hill country.
66 Everyone who heard about all this wondered what sort of child the infant would grow up to be. And sure enough, the Lord's hand was with him.
67 The Holy Spirit also filled his father Zacharias, and he prophesied, saying:
68 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has come to the aid of his people, and redeemed them.
69 He has raised up a [mighty sovereign] of deliverance and salvation for us in the house of his servant David,
70 As He said He would do through the mouths of the holy prophets, who have foretold this since the world began!
71 He will save us from our enemies and from the hands of all who hate us,
72 So He can enact the mercy promised to our ancestors, and remember His holy covenant,
73 The oath He made to our father Abraham:
74 That He would deliver us out of the hands of our enemies so we could serve Him freely, without fear,
75 In all holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our lives.
76 And you, child, shall be called a prophet of the Highest, for you will go before the face of the Lord to set the stage;
77 To teach the way of salvation to God's people through the remission of sins,
78 Accomplished through the tender mercy of our God, by whom the rising sun itself has descended to earth and come to us,
79 To give light to those trapped in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace!
80 And so the child grew, and became very powerful in spirit; and was in the deserts until the day he was revealed to Israel.

LUKE CHAPTER 2

1 And it came to pass in that time that Augustus Caesar issued an edict throughout the Roman Empire to take a census [for purposes of taxation].
2 [This first affected Judea when Cyrenius was controlling Syria.]
3 So everyone went to register for the census at the town his ancestors were from.
4 Joseph also came from Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem of Judea, the city of David his ancestor,
5 To be counted with his betrothed wife, Miriam, who was now in her ninth month of pregnancy. [This took place in early fall, during the Feast of Tabernacles, called the Festival of *Sukkot* by the Jews.]
6 It happened that while they were in Bethlehem, she was ready to give birth.
7 And she brought forth her firstborn son and wrapped him up in swaddling clothes, laying him inside a manger because there was no room for them in [Joseph's family's tabernacle].
8 In the same region, one night some shepherds were out in the fields, keeping watch on flocks of lambs [used for Temple sacrifices].
9 The angel of the Lord appeared to them, shining with God's radiance, and they were terrified.
10 But the angel said to them: Fear not! For look--I bring you news of great joy that shall bless all people!
11 For this night is born to you, in the city of David, a Savior, who is Messiah the Lord!
12 Here is how you will know him: You will find the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger!
13 Suddenly the angel was joined by a host of other angelic beings who were praising God, saying:
14 Glory to God in the highest! On earth, peace and good will to men!
15 As the angels left them and ascended into the sky, the shepherds said to each other: Let's go into Bethlehem and see this thing the Lord has made known to us!
16 So they rushed toward town and found Miriam, Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger.
17 After they had seen this, they spread word to others about what they had been told about the child they saw.
18 And everyone who heard this wondered about what the shepherds said about the child.
19 But Miriam remembered all of these events, and pondered them in her heart.
20 Meanwhile, the shepherds returned to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen as a result of what the angel had told them.
21 Now after eight days, when they came to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus because of what the angel had told Miriam before he was conceived in the womb.
22 And when the period of ritual defilement according to the Law of Moses was over, they brought the child to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord.
23 As it is written in the Torah of the Lord: **Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord**.
24 They also made the required [sin] sacrifice in the Torah of the Lord [for the mother]: *A pair of two turtledoves or pigeons*.
25 Now in Jerusalem at that time was a man named Simeon. This man was just and religious, waiting for the *Consolation of Israel*, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.
26 The Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would not die before seeing the Lord's Messiah.
27 Led by the Spirit one day, Simeon came to the Temple, and when Jesus' parents came to present him and offer up the required sacrifice in the Torah,

28 He took the babe into his arms and blessed God, saying:
29 Lord, now let Your servant die in peace, according to Your word,
30 For my eyes have now seen your salvation,
31 Which you have prepared in the sight of all people;
32 A light to enlighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel!
33 Joseph and his mother were amazed at the things that had been spoken about him.
34 And Simeon blessed them, and said to Miriam his mother: Behold--this child is fated to be the fall of some, and the rising up of many others in Israel; and for *a sign that will be spoken against*,
35 [So that what is in men's hearts will be revealed for all to see. A sword will pierce your own soul also!]
36 Now also there was a prophetess named Anna, daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very, very old, and had been widowed after seven years of marriage.
37 She was now eighty-four years old, and spent day and night in the Temple, serving God [as an intercessor,] fasting and praying.
38 She happened to approach while this was going on, and when she had seen the child she also gave prophetic praise to God for him, and spread word about him to everyone in Jerusalem faithfully awaiting deliverance.
39 When Joseph and Miriam had completed the requirements of the Law of the Lord, they returned to their own town of Nazareth, in Galilee.
40 And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was filled with wisdom, and God's grace was with him.
41 Now every year his parents would go to Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover as was customary [for devout Jews].
42 And when Jesus was twelve, they journeyed to Jerusalem, observing the custom of the Feast.
43 After everything was over, as they returned in a caravan to Galilee, the young Jesus slipped away and remained in Jerusalem, but Joseph and his mother didn't realize it.
44 They thought he was with friends or relatives in the caravan, and it was a full day before they started asking their family and friends if they had seen him.
45 When they realized he wasn't there, they rushed back to Jerusalem, trying to find him.
46 On the third day, they found him at the Temple sitting amidst the sages of Israel, listening to them and asking them questions.
47 Everyone there was amazed at the boy's wisdom of understanding, and the questions he answered.
48 When his parents saw him they were amazed, and his mother said: Son--why have you done this?! Your father and I have been going out of our minds with worry! We couldn't find you anywhere!
49 Jesus replied: How is it that you didn't know where to find me? Where else would I be but doing my Father's business [in His house]?
50 But they did not understand what he meant.
51 So Jesus returned home with them, and was obedient to them. Meanwhile, his mother kept all these things in her heart.
52 And in the years that followed, Jesus grew in wisdom and in size [for he was a large man], and increased in favor with both God and man.

LUKE CHAPTER 3

1 Now in the fifteenth year Tiberius Caesar ruled Rome [27 AD], Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod Antipas was Tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip was Tetrarch of Ituraea and the region of Trachonitis; and Lysanias was the Tetrarch of Abilene.
2 Caipahas was then the reigning High Priest [though his father-in-law, Annas, was still alive and had occupied that position before him]. It was at this time that John, the son of Zacharias, received a revelation from God out in the deserts.
3 And he went throughout Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins,
4 Fulfilling the prophecies of Isaiah the prophet: **The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight**.
5 **Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth;**
6 **And all flesh shall see the salvation of God**.
7 And he said to the multitude who sought baptism from him, saying: You generation of snakes! Who warned *you* to repent and escape God's coming wrath?
8 If you want to repent, prove it by changing the way that you think and act--and don't feel secure because you're physically descended from Abraham [and think that guarantees your being accepted by God]. I tell you that God can take these rocks [erected by Joshua] and turn *them* into children of Abraham if He wants to!
9 God's ax is ready to fell the trees that bear no good fruit, and those trees not bearing good fruit will be cast into the fire!
10 The people, meanwhile, asked John: What shall we do then?
11 He answered: Let the man with two coats give one to someone without any; and let the man with food on his table share with him who is starving!
12 Even some hated tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked: Rabbi--what should *we* do?
13 John's answer was: Take no more than the minimal taxes Rome demands.
14 Some soldiers likewise asked: What should *we* do? And John answered: Don't use violence to intimidate people; do not make a false accusation against anyone; and don't extort money, but be content with your wages.
15 Now since the people were in heightened expectation that the Messiah might come in their lifetime, they all pondered on their hearts whether John could be he.
16 But John denied it to them all, saying: I am indeed baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming whose sandal straps I am unworthy to untie--and he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire!
17 His fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly clean out the threshing floor, gathering the wheat into his storage bin while burning the chaff with everlasting fire!
18 John taught and exhorted many other things to the people as well.
19 But Herod Antipas, Tetrarch of Galilee, was a target of John's criticism for taking his brother Philip's wife, Herodias, for himself; and for his many other atrocities.
20 Bad as all these crimes were, even worse was that he cast John into a dungeon!
21 Now when all the people had been baptized, Jesus also came to be baptized, and when he arose from the water and prayed, the heavens parted,
22 And the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove upon him, and a voice from heaven said: You are my beloved Son! In you, I am well pleased!
23 Jesus was now about thirty years old, being [as was supposed] the son of Joseph [Let Him Add], who became son of Heli [Ascending],
24 Who was son of Matthat [Gift of God], who was son of Levi [Joined], who was son of Melchi [My King], who was son of Janna [Flourishing], who was son of Joseph [Let Him Add],

25 Who was son of Mattathias [Gift of Yahweh], who was son of Amos [Burden], who was son of Naum [Consolation], who was son of Esli [Reserved of Yahweh], who was son of Nagge [Illuminating],
26 Who was son of Maath [Small], who was son of Mattathias [Gift of Yahweh], who was son of Semei [Listen], who was son of Joseph [Let Him Add], who was son of Judah [He Shall Be Praised],
27 Who was son of Joanna [Gift of God], who was son of Rhesa [Head], who was son of Zorobabel [Born in Babylon], who was son of Salathiel Asked of God], who was son of Neri [Yahweh is my Lamp],
28 Who was son of Melchi [My King], who was son of Addi [Ornament], who was son of Cosam [Divining], who was son of Elmodam [Measure], who was son of Er [Watchful],
29 Who was son of Jose [He Will be Sustained by Yahweh], who was son of Eliezer [God is His Help], who was son of Jorim [Whom Yahweh Has Exalted], who was son of Matthat [Gift of God], who was son of Levi [Joined],
30 Who was son of Simeon [Harkening], who was son of Judah [He Shall be Praised], who was son of Joseph [Let Him Add], who was son of Jonan [Yahweh is a Gracious Giver], who was son of Eliakim [God Rising],
31 Who was son of Melea [My Dear Friend], who was son of Menan [Numbered], who was son of Mattatha [Givingness], who was son of Nathan [Given], who was son of David [Beloved],
32 Who was son of Jesse [Wealthy], who was son of Obed [Serving], who was son of Boaz [In Him is Strength], who was son of Salmon [A Garment], who was son of Naasson [Enchanter],
33 Who was son of Aminadab [One of the Prince's People], who was son of Aram [High], who was son of Esrom [Enclosed], who was son of Phares [a Breach], who was son of Judah [He Shall be Praised],
34 Who was son of Jacob [Heel-catcher or Supplanter], who was son of Isaac [Laughter], who was son of Abraham [Father of a Multitude], who was son of Thera [Station], who was son of Nahor [Snorting],
35 Who was son of Saruch [Intertwined], who was son of Ragau [Friend, Shepherd], who was son of Phalec [Division], who was son of Heber [The Region Beyond], who was son of Sala [Sprout],
36 Who was son of Cainan [Their Smith], who was son of Arphaxad [Stronghold of Chaldees], who was son of Shem [Name], who was son of Noe [Rest], who was son of Lamech [Powerful],
37 Who was son of Methuselah [Man of the Spear], who was son of Enoch [Dedicated], who was son of Jared [Descent], who was son of Maleleel [Praise of God], who was son of Cainan [Their Smith],
38 Who was son of Enos [Mortal Man], who was son of Seth [Compensation or Foundation], who was son of Adam [Of the Red Earth or Red], who was son of God [I WILL BE or I AM].

LUKE CHAPTER 4

1 And Jesus, filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the deserts,
2 Where he was tempted for forty days by the devil. During this time he ate nothing, and at the end he was very hungry.
3 Then the devil said to him: If you're the Son of God, command this rock to become bread!
4 Jesus answered him by saying: It is written that, *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from God's mouth*!
5 The devil took him up to a high mountain where he showed Jesus all the empires of the world in a moment of time.
6 The devil then said to him: I will give you all the power and glory of these kingdoms, for they have been handed over to me and to whomever I wish to bestow them.
7 If you will now bend your knee and do homage to *me*, all of it will be yours!
8 Jesus answered him: Get behind me, Satan! It is written, *You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve*!
9 Then the devil brought him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the Temple. He said: If you're the Son of God, jump off from here [for the people to see],
10 For it is written, **He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee:**
11 **And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.**
12 But Jesus answered him: It is said, *You shall not tempt the Lord your God*!
13 When the devil had finished all his temptations, he left Jesus for a time.
14 Then Jesus returned with the power of the Spirit into Galilee, and word of his exploits spread throughout the region.
15 And he taught in the synagogues, being highly honored by all who heard him.
16 Eventually, he came to Nazareth, where he had grown up; and as he usually did, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to give the Torah reading.
17 It happened that he was given the scroll of Isaiah that Sabbath, and he unrolled the scroll to a certain place, and read:
18 **The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,**
19 **To preach the acceptable year of the Lord**.
20 Jesus stopped reading at that point and rolled up the scroll, handing it to the attendant to be put away. Then he sat down with every eye in the synagogue on him.
21 He began saying to the assembly: This day, the Scriptures you have heard are being fulfilled.
22 Everyone knew there was something unique about him, and that he spoke with amazing charisma and authority, but still they said: Isn't this Joseph's son?
23 And Jesus replied: You will no doubt quote me the saying, "'Doctor, heal *yourself*'! Let's see you do the same miracles at home that you did in Capernaum!"
24 Truly, no prophet is accepted in his own country!
25 But I tell you truthfully, there were many Jewish widows in Israel during the days of Elijah when the rain was shut up in the heavens for three and-a-half years, causing a great famine in all the land.
26 But Elijah was sent to none of these, but to Sarepta in Sidon, to a *Gentile* widow there!
27 There were also many lepers in Israel when Elisha the prophet had *his* ministry, yet none were healed except Naaman, a *Syrian*!
28 When the men in the synagogue heard these words [about Gentiles being preferred over Jews], they were enraged!
29 And they rose up, and forced Jesus out of the city to the edge of a cliff the city was built on, planning to throw him off [as a precursor to stoning him].
30 But he [became invisible, and] passed through the crowd. Then he left the area,
31 And came to Capernaum, a city in Galilee, where he began teaching each Sabbath.
32 Everyone was amazed at his teachings, for he spoke with unquestioned authority.
33 Now in the synagogue was a man possessed by a demon, and he cried out loudly:

34 Leave us alone! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are--the Holy One of God!
35 Jesus rebuked the spirit, saying: Shut up, and come out of him! And after the demon cast the man onto the ground in the midst of the assembly, it came out of him and left the man unharmed.
36 All the synagogue was amazed, and spoke amongst themselves, saying: What new sort of preaching is this?! He commands demons with authority and power, and they come out!
37 And his reputation spread to every part of the region.
38 Jesus left the synagogue and went into Shimon's house. There, Shimon's mother-in-law had a serious fever, and they asked him to help her.
39 He stood over her and rebuked the fever, and immediately it left her. The woman then arose and prepared food for everyone.
40 Now at dusk, people brought the sick and diseased to him, and he laid hands on them and healed every one!
41 Demon spirits came out of many of them, crying out: "You are the Anointed One, the Son of God!" as they did. But Jesus rebuked them, and commanded them not to speak, for they knew he was the Messiah.
42 At dawn, Jesus left the house and went out to a deserted place [to pray], and the people sought him out. When they found him, they begged him not to leave them.
43 But he said: I must preach the message of the Kingdom of God to other cities as well, for that is why I have been sent.
44 So he went about Galilee, preaching in the synagogues.

LUKE CHAPTER 5

1 In time, as Jesus stood by the shore of the Sea of Galilee and the people thronged about him to hear him proclaim the Message of God,
2 He saw a couple of boats beached along the shore as their owners were on land, washing their nets.
3 Jesus climbed into one, which happened to be Shimon's, and he asked him to row out a few yards into the lake. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.
4 When his teaching was over, he said to Shimon: Row out to a deep place, and let your nets down for a catch.
5 But Shimon answered: Rabbi--we worked like slaves all night, and caught nothing [and daytime is the wrong time to fish, since they will see and avoid the nets, plus they all feed by the shore anyway]. Nevertheless, I'll let down a net at your word.
6 After they did this, the net was filled with so many fish that it started to break!
7 Peter and Andrew then waved for their partners in the other boat to come help them, so they came to their aid. Even so, there were so many fish between the two boats that they were nearly swamped!
8 When Shimon Peter saw this, he fell down at Jesus' knees, and exclaimed: Go away from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!
9 For he and the others in the boat were astonished at the great haul of fish they caught,
10 As were James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, who were Shimon's partners in the other boat. But Jesus replied to Shimon: Fear not, for from now on you will catch men!
11 After the boats landed, the fishermen left all behind, and followed Jesus.
12 Now it came to pass that Jesus entered into a certain city, and a man with leprosy who saw him fell on his face and pleaded with him, saying: Lord--if you want, you can make me clean!
13 Jesus reached out and touched him, saying: I will--be cleansed! And immediately the leprosy vanished!
14 Jesus warned him: Tell no one about this, but go and show yourself to the High Priest, and offer up the sacrifice for a cleansed leper Moses required, as a testimony to the priests.
15 But after this, his fame spread everywhere, and vast hosts of people came to hear him teach, and to be healed by him of their infirmities.
16 Eventually, Jesus withdrew into the desert, and prayed.
17 Some time after this, Jesus was teaching, and sitting there were Pharisees and masters of Mosaic Law who had come from every part of Israel to listen to him; and on that day the power of the Lord was present to heal them.
18 While this was going on, some men arrived carrying a litter upon which lay a paralytic man; and they tried to get him inside the house so they could lay him before Jesus [for healing].
19 But when they couldn't get through the crowd, they found a way up to the roof of the house and pried some tiles off to make a hole. Then they lowered the man and his litter down into the midst of the crowd before Jesus.
20 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic: Man, the sins you committed [that caused this malady] are forgiven you.
21 Now the Torah teachers and Pharisees were offended at hearing this, and wondered such things as: *Why is this man speaking blasphemously [as if he is God]? Who can forgive sins but God alone?!*
22 But when Jesus perceived what was in their minds, he answered: What are you debating in your hearts--
23 Whether it's easier to say, "Your sins are forgiven," than it is to say, "Rise up and walk"?
24 But so you can know that the Son of Man has the right on earth to forgive sins, I say: Rise, pick up your bed, and go walk home!
25 And the man was immediately healed, picked up his litter, and walked home, glorifying God.
26 Everyone was astonished beyond comprehension, and glorified God as well. They were also filled with awe, and said among themselves: We have seen strange things today!
27 After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector named [Matthew] sitting at the customs table, and he told him: Follow me!
28 Hearing this, [Matthew] dropped everything, and rose up to follow.
29 Later that night, [Matthew] held a banquet in his honor, and he invited his fellow tax collectors, along with many others, who sat and dined with them.
30 But the Torah teachers among the Pharisees grumbled to the disciples, asking: Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinful people?!
31 Jesus heard, and replied: The well don't need a doctor--the sick do!
32 I came not to call the righteous to repentance, but the sinners!
33 [Some of John's disciples] asked: Why do John's followers--and the Pharisees--fast, and pray [and afflict their souls on a regular basis], while your followers feast and drink?
34 Jesus responded: What groomsmen fast [and mourn] in the presence of the bridegroom?
35 But the days will come soon enough when the bridegroom will be taken away, and then they will fast [and mourn].
36 Jesus also spoke a parable to them: No one sews a patch of new cloth on an old, used garment because they are incompatible: The new patch will shrink in the wash, and pull the garment apart!
37 Likewise, no one puts new wine into old, stiff wineskins, or the fermenting wine will split the wineskins and leak out.
38 Fresh wine must be put in fresh wineskins, and both will be preserved!

39 And no man who's used to drinking old wine wants new wine, for he says, "Old wine is better."

LUKE CHAPTER 6

1 One day, during a Sabbath for the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Jesus and the disciples were passing through a wheat field, and the disciples [--but not Jesus--] plucked some of the wheat heads and rolled them in their palms to loosen some of the kernels to eat.
2 Some Pharisees who saw this said: [Why are you breaking the Sabbath laws by harvesting grain?!]
3 Jesus answered: Did you never even read so much as what David did when he and his men were hungry?
4 How he went into the House of God, and brought out the *shewbread* so they could all eat? As you know, the Law technically says the *shewbread* is only for the priests to eat. [Yet God wasn't offended by this, was He?]
5 So I tell you, the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath [and can rule with authority on what may and may not be done on it].
6 On another Sabbath, Jesus entered a synagogue to teach, and in it was a man whose right hand was deformed.
7 The Torah teachers and Pharisees now were watching to see if Jesus would heal him on the Sabbath so they could have a basis for criticizing him.
8 But Jesus knew what they were thinking, and said to the man with the deformed hand: Arise, and stand before us. And the man did so.
9 Then Jesus said to the religious leaders: I have just one question for you: Does the Law teach you to do good on the Sabbath days, or to do evil? To save life, or to destroy it?
10 When no one answered, Jesus looked around at all of them, and then told the man: Stretch out your hand! The man did so, and it was healed and made whole just like his other hand!
11 The religious leaders were furious at this, so they met together and began debating what to do to Jesus.
12 Around this time, Jesus went up upon a mountain to pray, and he was in prayer all night to God.
13 At dawn, he called his disciples and selected twelve men from them he also named as apostles. They included:
14 Shimon, whom he also named Peter; and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew,
15 Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot,
16 Jude, the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, who was the traitor.
17 And he came down to a plain with his disciples where a throng of people from Judea and Jerusalem, and the coasts of Tyre and Sidon were waiting. They had all come to hear him, and to be healed of their afflictions,
18 And to be delivered from the influence of demons; and all of them were healed.
19 Everyone tried to touch Jesus, for power went out from him and healed all!
20 Jesus looked upon his disciples, and said: Blessed are you who are poor, for the Kingdom of God is yours.
21 Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall eat, and be full. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.
22 Blessed are you when men shall hate, shun, and speak ill of your name for the Son of Man's sake.
23 Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for your reward in heaven will be great! Their fathers treated the prophets the same way!
24 But woe to you who are rich, for you have received all the comfort you will ever get!
25 Woe to you who are full, for you shall hunger. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.
26 Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that was how the *false* prophets were treated by *their* fathers!
27 But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, and do good to those who hate you.
28 Bless those who curse you, and pray for those who take advantage of you.
29 [And if someone insults you, ignore it and keep silent.] If someone takes your coat away, don't try to stop him from taking your shirt away too.
30 Give to anyone who asks, and don't seek to recover what someone else has taken from you.
31 And treat men the way you would want them to treat you.
32 For if you do no more than love those who love you back, what merit is there in that? Even sinners love their own friends and family!
33 And if you only do good to those who likewise do good to you in return, what merit is there in that? Even sinners do that!
34 And if you lend money or goods only to those you can expect to help you in like manner someday, what merit is in that? Even sinners loan back and forth to each other.
35 But love your enemies, and do *them* good. Lend to them when they are in need, and don't think of repayment. In doing this, your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Highest, for He is kind even to the ungrateful and the evil [in hope they will realize their wrongs, and repent].
36 So be merciful, as your Father is merciful.
37 Don't become your own judge and jury [and take vengeance for wrongs done to you]! Don't condemn someone for what they've done to you, and then God won't condemn you for what you've done to *Him*. Instead, forgive--and God will likewise forgive your wrongdoing.
38 Give to others, and it will be given back to you in great abundance. For the same measure that you give will return to you.
39 Then Jesus spoke this parable to them: Can the blind lead the blind? Won't they both fall into a ditch?
40 The student is not above his master, and the perfect disciple is the one who is just like the master he was taught by.
41 So then--why do some see a splinter in their brother's eye, yet miss the log that is in their own?
42 Or how can one say to his brother, "Brother--let me pull that splinter out of your eye," when there is a log in his own? You hypocrite--take the log out of your own eye first, and then you will be able to see well enough to take the splinter out of your brother's!
43 You see, a good tree doesn't sprout bad fruit, nor does a rotten tree sprout good fruit.
44 A tree--good or bad--is what it is, and reveals what it is by the fruit that it bears. You don't get figs off thorn vines, nor do you pluck grapes from a bramble bush.
45 Likewise, a good man with a good heart bears good fruit, just as an evil man with an evil heart brings forth bad fruit--and the things you say reveal what sort of heart you have!
46 So why would you pay lip service to me, saying, "Lord! Lord!" and then ignore what I tell you to do?
47 Whoever comes to me, hears and understands my teachings, and *does* put them into practice in his life, is like this:
48 He's like a man who built a house with a good, deep foundation laid in the bedrock, and when the flood came and washed against the house, it could not be destroyed because it was founded upon solid rock.
49 But he who hears my teachings and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on a flood plain with no foundation. As soon as the storm came and the river rose, it immediately fell and was washed away!

LUKE CHAPTER 7

1 After Jesus finished teaching in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum.
2 Now there was a chief Roman centurion [--a *Principale*--] who had a slave that was very dear to him. This same slave was ill, and on the verge of death.
3 When the centurion heard of Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to beg Jesus to come heal his slave.
4 When the elders found Jesus, they urgently begged him to help, saying that the officer was worthy of his intervention.
5 Because, they said, he loves our people, and even paid for our synagogue to be built.
6 So Jesus went with them, and as he neared the centurion's house, the officer sent some friends to him, saying: Lord--don't trouble yourself on account of me, for I am not worthy that you should enter my house.
7 Nor did I think myself worthy to come ask your help myself, but just command my boy be healed, and that will be enough.
8 For I am a man under authority, with soldiers under me, and I tell one "Go," and he goes; or say to another, "Come," and he comes; and to my servant, "Do this," and he does.
9 When Jesus heard these things, he was amazed at the centurion and the message he sent, and turned toward the crowd following, saying: I have yet to find a Jew in Israel with such strong faith!
10 The people who were sent then returned to the house and found the slave who had been sick was now healed.
11 The next day, Jesus went into the city of Nain, and many of his disciples followed along with a large crowd.
12 Now as Jesus approached the city gate, a funeral procession was leaving, for a man had died who was an only child, and his mother--a widow--was leaving to bury him. A large crowd of mourners from the city also accompanied her.
13 When the Lord saw the woman, he had compassion on her, and said to her: Don't cry!
14 And he came up and touched the bier, and those carrying it halted. Then he said: Young man, I say to you--arise!
15 Then he who was dead sat up and started speaking, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.
16 Great fear fell upon the people, and they gave glory to God, saying: "A great prophet has arisen among us!"; and, "God has visited His people!"
17 This story spread throughout Judea and everywhere around it.
18 Meanwhile, John the Baptist's disciples told him about all Jesus was doing [along with reports of his teachings, including not to use violence, but to love one's enemies].
19 So John summoned and sent two of these disciples to ask Jesus: Are you the only Messiah coming, or is there another Messiah coming after you [who will deliver the people from Rome]?
20 When the men arrived and met Jesus, they said: John the Baptizer has sent us to ask: Are you the one who was prophesied to come? Or should we look for another coming after you [who will fulfill *all* the promises regarding the Messianic Age]?
21 Jesus said nothing, but immediately turned about, healing everyone in sight, casting out demons, and giving sight to the blind.
22 Then Jesus returned to John's disciples, and told them: Go back and tell John what you just saw--how the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the Gospel is preached to the poor.
23 And tell him: "Blessed is he who is not offended [if I don't do what he wants or expects me to do]!"
24 As the two messengers of John departed, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about him: What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed blowing back and forth in the wind?
25 What did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft, costly garments? No--those who wear regal robes, and live in comfort, are found in kings' courts.
26 So what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, he was, I tell you--and much more than *just* a prophet!
27 John was he about whom it was written, **Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee**.
28 For I tell you, among all the children ever born of women, there has not been a greater prophet than John the Baptist! Even so, the lowest-ranking member in the Kingdom of God is greater than he!
29 Now everyone who believed John, including the tax collectors, agreed with the plan of God, receiving John's baptism [of repentance].
30 But the Pharisees and the Torah teachers rejected the plan God had for *them* because they rejected John's baptism.
31 And [regarding these groups,] the Lord said: What shall I liken the men of this generation to? What sort of men are they?
32 They are like spoiled brats sitting in a marketplace, calling out to each other: "You didn't dance to the tune of our wedding march, so we played a funeral dirge and you wouldn't respond to that either. [What's *your* problem?]"
33 For John the Baptist was [a Nazirite,] living a Spartan existence in the deserts, neither eating bread nor drinking wine--and you said, ["He's crazy!"]
34 But then the Son of Man came, willing to eat and drink with you in your houses, and yet you say: "This is a gluttonous drunkard who wants to get in good with tax collectors and sinners!"
35 [As all wise people display what they are by what they say and do, so do all witless people!]
36 One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to dine with him, so he went to the man's house and reclined to eat.
37 A woman in the town with a bad reputation as a sinner, after hearing that Jesus was having dinner at the Pharisee's house, came and brought an alabaster vial of ointment.
38 She stood at his feet behind him, weeping, and began to wash his feet with her tears. Then she dried them with her long hair. Finally, she kissed his feet and anointed them with perfumed oil from the vial.
39 When the Pharisee who invited him saw this, he was offended by such an inappropriate act, and thought to himself, *If this man were truly a prophet, he'd know who and what sort of woman he is letting touch him, for she is a sinner.*
40 Jesus knew what he was thinking, and so he spoke, saying: Simon--I have something to tell you. Simon replied: Teacher, say on!
41 Once, there was a banker that had two debtors who owed him money. One owed him five hundred coins, and the other fifty.
42 Neither could repay the debt, and he decided to freely forgive both of them, and write the debts off. Now--which of the two do you think [would be more grateful,] and love him the most?
43 Simon answered: I suppose the one who was forgiven the greater debt. And Jesus replied: You have answered correctly.
44 Then Jesus turned to the woman, and said to Simon: See this woman? I entered into your house and you didn't even offer me some water to wash my feet, but she came and washed my feet with her tears, and dried them with the hair of her head.
45 You gave me no kiss of greeting, but since I came in, she has not stopped covering my feet with kisses.
46 You didn't anoint my head with oil, but she anointed my feet with perfumed ointment.
47 Because of this, I tell you her many sins are forgiven, for she loved greatly. But he who is forgiven little, also loves little.
48 Then he told the woman: Your sins are forgiven you!

49 Others sitting at the dinner table began thinking: *Who does he think he is, pronouncing sins forgiven?* [*Only God can do that!*]
50 But Jesus said to the woman: Your faith has saved you--go with peace upon you.

LUKE CHAPTER 8

1 After this, Jesus went throughout every village and town that he could, preaching the glad tidings of the message of the Messianic Kingdom, and the twelve disciples followed him,
2 Along with certain women whom he had healed of demons and infirmities. These included Mary, called Magdalene, who had been possessed by seven demons,
3 Joanna--wife to Herod's steward Chuza--Susanna, and many others who supported Jesus' ministry with their own funds.
4 And when a great crowd from every city was assembled to hear Jesus speak, he told them a parable:
5 A farmer went out to sow a field. As he did, some seed fell by the side of the road, was trodden down, and the birds came and ate it up.
6 Other seed fell on a rock with thin topsoil, and as soon as it sprouted, it withered away because it could get no water.
7 Some seed fell into weeds, and they sprang up with it, and choked it.
8 But other seed fell on good ground and sprang up, eventually bearing fruit a hundredfold! When Jesus had said these things, he cried out: Whoever can understand, let him understand.
9 The disciples asked: What does this parable mean?
10 Jesus answered: To you disciples is given the honor of understanding the mysteries of the Messianic Kingdom. But outsiders must hear only parables, *that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand*.
11 Now here is what it all meant: The seed is the Message of God.
12 Those by the wayside are the ones who hear the Message, but the devil comes and takes the Message from their hearts, lest they believe and be saved.
13 The ones on the rock are those who hear the Message, and receive it joyfully at first--but they have shallow roots [and temporary faith]. Thus, they eventually fall away because of temptation [or trial].
14 Those among the thorns are the people who, after they've heard the Message, get distracted by focusing on riches, cares, and pleasures of this life so they bear no mature fruit of the Message in their lives.
15 But those on good ground are those with good and honest hearts who hear the Message, do what it says, and show the fruit of that in their lives through their endurance.
16 No man, when he has lit a candle, covers it with a basket or hides it under a bed--you put it in a candlestick so anyone coming near can see by its light.
17 For nothing can be hidden forever; [the truth of what a man is will eventually be revealed for all to see].
18 So be careful of how you hear, for [he who listens with the right sort of heart will be given more light of truth; but he who listens with a corrupted heart will have taken from him what little truth he may already have as he grows in the darkness of deception]!
19 Then Jesus' mother and brethren came, but could not get near Jesus because of the crowds.
20 Word reached him, and he was told: Your mother and brethren are standing outside, wanting to see you.
21 But Jesus answered: My mother and brethren are those who hear and do the Message of God!
22 One day, Jesus got in a boat with the disciples, and he said: Let's go to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. So they hoisted sail.
23 Now as they sailed off, Jesus fell asleep, and a great storm arose that threatened to swamp the boat.
24 The disciples scrambled to awaken him, saying: Master! Master! We're going to drown! Then Jesus stood up and rebuked the wind, then rebuked the tumultuous water, and they immediately quieted down.
25 Jesus said to the disciples: Where is your faith? But they, being afraid and amazed, mumbled to one another: What kind of man is this, that he commands the wind and the waves, and they obey him?!
26 They eventually arrived in the land of the Gadarenes, which is on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee, next to the district of Galilee.
27 When they landed, they were met by a naked man from Gadara who had been possessed by demons for a long time. He dwelt in no house, but in the graveyard tombs.
28 When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting: What do we have to do with each other, Jesus, Son of God Most High?! I beg you not to torment me!
29 He said this because Jesus had been ordering the demon to come out. Now this demon had often manifested itself with great violence. The man had, for instance, frequently been bound hand and foot with chains and ropes, but the demon in him had snapped them with ease, and drove him into the wilderness.
30 [Because the demon wasn't going quickly,] Jesus asked: What is your name? Since there were many of them, it answered: We're a whole legion of demons!
31 And they begged him not to send them to the Abyss.
32 It happened that there was a large herd of pigs feeding on a nearby hill, and the demons begged Jesus to allow them to possess the animals, to which he agreed.
33 So the demons went out of the man and possessed the pigs. Then the maddened herd ran off a cliff, and drowned.
34 When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they ran into the city and spread word of it throughout the area.
35 Then everyone came to see for themselves, and found Jesus. The former demoniac was with him, sitting at Jesus' feet clothed and back in his right mind. Seeing this, the crowd didn't know what to think, and were afraid.
36 Others who saw it explained to them how the demon-possessed man had been healed.
37 This made them even more afraid, and everyone from the Gadarene area started begging Jesus to go somewhere else, so Jesus started to board the ship, and return to the other side.
38 The former demoniac begged to go with him but Jesus sent him away, saying:
39 Return to your family, and tell what great things God has done for you today! This he did, telling the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.
40 When Jesus crossed back to the east side of the lake, the usual crowd was waiting, and joyfully welcomed him back.
41 Now there was a ruler of the local synagogue named Jairus, and he fell at Jesus' feet, begging him to come to his house.
42 For his only child, a daughter twelve years of age, was dying from an illness. Jesus agreed to go with him, but he could hardly move for the press of the crowd.
43 Among the crowd was a woman who had been stricken with a uterine discharge for twelve years. She had spent every cent she had on doctors, but they could not heal her malady.
44 She came up behind Jesus and touched the tassels of his prayer shawl--and instantly the blood ceased flowing!
45 Jesus immediately halted and asked: Who touched me? When everyone denied touching him, Peter and the others spoke up, saying: Master--the crowd is almost crushing you, and you're asking, "Who touched me?!"

46 But Jesus said: Someone touched me, for I felt healing power go out from me.
47 When the woman realized she was found out, she came up, shaking in fear, and fell before him. Then she told her story in front of everyone, and how she was immediately healed.
48 Jesus told her: Daughter, don't worry. Your faith has made you whole. Go with peace upon you.
49 While he was speaking, someone came from Jairus' house, and said: Your daughter has died. Don't trouble the Master further.
50 But when Jesus heard this, he told Jairus: Don't fear! Just believe, and she will be made whole!
51 When he reached the house, he allowed no one else inside except for Peter, James, and John, and the girl's parents.
52 The mourners, meanwhile, were weeping, but Jesus said: Stop weeping! She is not dead--only asleep!
53 They laughed derisively at this statement because they knew she was dead.
54 He then cast out the mourners and took the girl by the hand, calling out: Girl, arise!
55 Her spirit then returned to her body, and she woke up. Jesus then told them to give her some meat.
56 Her parents were amazed, but he ordered them not to tell anyone about this miracle.

LUKE CHAPTER 9

1 Then Jesus gathered the twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure disease.
2 He sent them out to preach the Kingdom of God, and heal the sick.
3 And he told them: Take nothing for your journey. Not a staff. Not a bag. Not bread. Not money. Not more than one coat.
4 And whatever house you enter into, stay there until your work in that town is done, then depart.
5 And if people do not accept you, shake off the dust of your feet when you leave that city for a testimony against them.
6 So the disciples departed to the various towns, preaching the Gospel and healing everywhere they went.
7 Now Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch of Galilee, heard about what Jesus was doing and wasn't sure what to think, for some were saying John the Baptist must have risen from the dead.
8 Others thought it must be the coming of Elijah, or else that it was one of the ancient prophets risen from the dead.
9 But Herod said: I beheaded John, but who is this new man I'm hearing about? And he wanted to see Jesus.
10 Meanwhile, the apostles returned, and told Jesus how their activities had gone. Then Jesus took them into a desert place near Bethsaida.
11 When the crowd knew this, they followed, and Jesus welcomed them; and he taught everyone about the Kingdom of God. He also healed everyone who needed it.
12 Near dusk, the twelve came to Jesus, and said: Send the crowd away so they can go into the towns and countryside for food and lodging since we are in a desert.
13 But Jesus' reply was: *You* feed them! They said: All we have are five loaves and a couple of fish, unless we find some way to go buy enough food to feed this army of people!
14 You see, there were about five thousand men there. So Jesus said to the disciples: Sit them down in groups of fifty.
15 The disciples did as they were told, and sat the crowd down.
16 Then Jesus took the five loaves and two fish, and looking up into the sky he blessed God and began distributing to the disciples who, in turn, gave to the people.
17 And everyone ate until they were full, and the leftovers filled twelve baskets.
18 Some time after this incident, Jesus was praying by himself, and the disciples were with him. Ending his prayer, he asked them: Whom are the people saying that I am?
19 They answered: John the Baptist…Elijah…some even think you're one of the other ancient prophets, returned from the dead.
20 But Jesus asked: Whom do *you* say that I am? Peter replied: The Anointed One of God!
21 And he solemnly instructed them to tell no man this.
22 Then he warned them: The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the religious leaders, the Temple priests, and the Torah teachers. Then he will be slain, but be raised the third day.
23 And he said to them all: If any man will follow me, let him deny his own wants, and take up his cross and follow me day by day.
24 For whoever seeks to save his life will ultimately lose it, but whoever will lose his life for my sake will ultimately save it!
25 For what advantage is there to gain the whole world and in the end [lose your soul or be cast away from God]?
26 For anyone who shall be ashamed of me and my words will see me ashamed of him when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and that of his Father and the holy angels.
27 But I tell you truthfully, some are standing here who will not die before they glimpse the Kingdom of God!
28 Now about eight days after saying this, Jesus took Peter, John, and James up onto a mountain to pray.
29 As he prayed, his face was transformed, and his clothing became white and shining.
30 Then two men--Moses and Elijah--appeared, and began speaking with him!
31 Both prophets were in a glorified state, and spoke of what he was ordained to do and accomplish in Jerusalem before returning to heaven.
32 While this was happening, Peter and the others had fallen deeply asleep; and when they awakened, they saw Jesus' glory and the two men standing with him.
33 [They were speechless,] but then, as the two prophets began to depart from Jesus, Peter called out to Jesus without thinking: Master--it is good that we are here! Let us make three shelters for you, Moses, and Elijah!
34 As he was speaking, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they feared as the cloud engulfed them.
35 A voice came forth from the cloud that said: This is my beloved Son--listen to him!
36 When the voice echoed away, the cloud vanished, and Jesus was alone with them. They kept this event to themselves, telling no one for quite some time what they had seen.
37 The next day, when they descended the mountain, a large crowd met Jesus.
38 Someone in the crowd caught Jesus' attention by saying: Master, I beg you--look upon my son, for he is my only child!
39 A demon comes upon him and causes him to fall down in an epileptic fit, making him foam at the mouth and thrash about, bruising him--and the fit lasts for some time!
40 I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they couldn't!
41 Jesus replied: O faithless and perverse generation! How long must I be here, and put up with you? Bring your son here.
42 As the boy was being brought up, the demon caused him to drop to the ground with an epileptic fit. Jesus then rebuked the demon and healed the boy, thereafter returning him to his father.
43 Everyone was amazed at this mighty demonstration of God's power, but while they all wondered about the things Jesus was doing, he said to the disciples:
44 Listen to me--the Son of Man will soon be delivered into the hands of men.

45 But they did not understand this, and were prevented from grasping Jesus' meaning, and were afraid to ask him what he meant.
46 After this, an argument arose amongst them as to whom was the most important disciple.
47 Realizing what they were thinking, Jesus took a small child and set him by his side.
48 He told them: Whoever receives a child as a follower of mine receives me; and whoever receives me, receives Him who sent me. And the one among you who thinks himself to be the least of all shall be the greatest.
49 John now answered, and said: Master, we saw a man casting out demons in your name, and we made him stop because he wasn't one of our group.
50 But Jesus replied: Don't stop him! Anyone who is not against us is for us!
51 Now it came to pass that when the time neared for Jesus to return to heaven, he resolutely determined to go on to Jerusalem.
52 He sent some messengers on ahead of him, and they entered into a Samaritan village to prepare for his arrival.
53 But the people turned him away when they realized he was going on to Jerusalem.
54 When his disciples, James and John, saw this, they urged Jesus, saying: Lord--shall we call fire down from heaven to burn them up as Elijah did?
55 But Jesus turned and rebuked them, saying: [You have no idea what sort of demon you're listening to when you say things like that!]
56 The Son of Man didn't come to *take* men's lives, but to *save* men's lives! So they went on to another village.
57 As they continued down the road, a man came up, saying: Lord--I will follow you wherever you go!
58 Jesus replied: Foxes have dens, birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. [Are you really sure you can pay the price of following me?]
59 Jesus told another: Follow me! But he said: Lord, please let me bury my father first.
60 Jesus replied: Let the dead bury their dead--you go proclaim the Kingdom of God!
61 Another said: Lord--I will come with you, but let me first go tell my family farewell.
62 But Jesus said: No man who starts to plow, but turns from what is ahead to look to what is behind, is worthy of the Kingdom of God!

LUKE CHAPTER 10

1 After this, the Lord selected seventy other disciples to go in pairs to every city and place he later planned to visit.
2 So he told them: The harvest is truly great, but there are few laborers to take it in. Pray that the Lord of the Harvest will send laborers to gather His harvest in.
3 Go as I've sent you, but know that I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.
4 Take neither purse, nor sack, nor sandals [--go with only the clothes on your back]. Speak to no one until you arrive at your destination.
5 And in whatever house you enter, first say: "Peace be to this house."
6 If a man of peace lives there, your peace will rest upon his house. If not, then your blessing shall return to you.
7 Stay in only one house when you are in a city, and eat and drink whatever they offer you, for a workman has the right to expect his wages. Don't change residences.
8 And in whatever city you happen to be in that they welcome you, eat what they offer you.
9 Heal the sick in those cities, and proclaim: "The Kingdom of God has come near to you!"
10 But if a city does not welcome you, go into the street and proclaim in everyone's hearing:
11 "We shake off even the dust of your town that sticks to us as a sign [of what will happen to you]--but be certain that the Kingdom of God is near you just the same!"
12 I tell you, Sodom will fare better on Judgment Day than *that* city will!
13 Woe to you, Chorazin and Bethsaida! For if the great miracles done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they long ago would have repented to a man, sitting in goatskin and ashes!
14 Tyre and Sidon will get off easier at the Last Judgment than *you* will!
15 And you, Capernaum--shall you be exalted up to heaven? No, you will be cast down to *Sheol* instead.
16 He who hears you, hears me! And he who rejects you, rejects me--and he who rejects me, also rejects Him who sent me!
17 In time, the seventy returned joyfully, saying:
Lord--even the demons obey us when we use your name!
18 Jesus answered: I beheld [the power and authority of] Satan broken with the speed of lightning [before he even knew what was happening]!
19 Behold, I give you authority to trample upon snakes and scorpions; and I grant you authority over all the power of the enemy--and nothing will harm you in any way!
20 But don't rejoice at the fact that demon spirits are subject to you; rejoice that your names are enrolled in heaven!
21 Then Jesus shouted in the joy of the Spirit, and said: I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You hid the secrets of the Kingdom from the learned, and revealed them instead to simple people, for it seemed good in Your sight to do that!
22 All things have been entrusted to me by my Father, yet no man truly knows the Son and what he is but the Father; and no one knows who and what the Father is but His Son, and he to whom the Son reveals Him.
23 Jesus turned to the disciples, and said privately to them: Blessed are your eyes, which are seeing these things!
24 For I tell you that many prophets and kings yearned to see and hear what you are beholding, and died without that honor.
25 Now a certain expert on Mosaic Law stood up and tried to entrap Jesus by asking: Master--what must I do to inherit eternal life?
26 Jesus replied: What's *your* understanding of what the Law says about that?
27 He answered: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind, and you must love your neighbor as yourself.
28 Jesus agreed, saying: You've answered correctly. If you really do that, you will have eternal life.
29 But the man, wanting to justify himself [and the fact that he didn't love everyone], responded: Who qualifies as my neighbor, though?
30 Jesus answered with a parable: A man was traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho, and on the way he was accosted by bandits who beat him half to death, and left him naked by the side of the road.
31 A priest came along, but when he saw him crossed to the other side of the road and continued on his way.
32 Later, a Levite came along and did likewise [because, like the priest, he didn't want to be bothered].
33 But then a Samaritan on a journey came along, saw the man, and had compassion on him.

34 He went over and picked him up, washed and bound his wounds with oil and wine, and set the man on his donkey. Then he led him to an inn and took care of him.
35 The next day, when he was to depart, he paid two silver pennies to the innkeeper, telling him: "Take care of the man until he can travel, and I will reimburse you whatever it costs when I return this way."
36 Jesus now asked: Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man whom the bandits wounded?
37 The man said: The one who showed mercy to him. Jesus added: Go have the same attitude, and be the same sort of man.
38 Now it came to pass that they entered the village of Bethany, and a woman named Martha invited Jesus [and the twelve] into her house.
39 This Martha had a sister named Mary who, with the disciples, sat in a group and learned from Jesus' teachings.
40 But Martha was flustered, busily trying to prepare dinner for them all by herself, so she came to Jesus, and said: Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to prepare the meal by myself? Please tell her to get up and help me!
41 But Jesus answered: Martha, Martha--you have too much on your mind.
42 The truth is, there is only one thing you should be concerned about, and Mary has found it. What she has found will not be lost merely to have dinner.

LUKE CHAPTER 11

1 Some time after this, Jesus was praying at a certain place. When he finished, one of the disciples asked: Lord, teach us to pray, just as John used to teach *his* disciples.
2 And he answered: When you pray, say: *Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.*
3 *Give us day by day our daily bread*.
4 *And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil*.
5 Jesus added: With respect to prayer, say one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight, saying, "My
friend--lend me three loaves of bread,
6 "For an acquaintance of mine has suddenly paid me a visit on his travels, and I have nothing to give him!"
7 Your friend may well call out from within, "Don't bother me--the door is locked, and we're all in bed! I can't get up and help you!"
8 But if you persist in knocking, even if he won't help you out of friendship, I tell you he'll rise up and give you as many loaves as you need because of your persistence.
9 So I say to you: Ask God, and it will be given to you.
Seek, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened to you.
10 For everyone who asks shall receive, and anyone who seeks will find, and he who knocks will have the door opened.
11 If a son comes to any of you men who are fathers and asks for some bread, do you give him a rock? Or if he begs for a broiled fish, do you hand him a snake?
12 Or if he wants an egg, do you offer him a scorpion?
13 [Of course not!] So if you earthly fathers, who are evil in comparison to your Father in heaven, give good gifts to your own children, how much more will your heavenly Father will give the *Holy Spirit* to those who ask Him?
14 Later, Jesus was casting out a demon that caused a man to be mute. When the demon left, the man could speak once more, and the people were amazed.
15 But some said: He's casting out demons by the authority of Beelzebub, the chief of demons!
16 Others, challenging him, demanded he produce a sign from heaven [to prove he was of God].
17 But he knew their thoughts, and said to them: Every kingdom in civil war is brought to desolation; and every house divided against itself shall not stand.
18 If Satan is at war with his own forces, how can his kingdom possibly survive? That must be the case because you claim I am casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub!
19 And if *my* power comes from Beelzebub, what power do *you* have to cast them out? [None!] So between the two of us, these fleeing demons are passing judgment on *you*, not me!
20 But if *I* am doing this by the [power] of *God*, then no doubt the *Kingdom* of God must be in front of your very eyes!
21 For when an armed warlord oversees his stronghold, all his booty is safe.
22 But when a hero stronger than the warlord bests him and ties him up helpless, the hero takes the armor the warlord trusted would protect him, and then picks through the warlord's treasure with impunity.
23 You are either for me or against me! If you don't help me gather in the harvest, then you are trying to scatter the harvest into the wind to be lost.
24 When a demon is cast out of a man, he wanders the deserts seeking a place of rest, but finding none, he says to himself, "I'll go back to the one I was cast out of!"
25 So he returns and finds the man he once possessed [cleansed from his presence].
26 Then the demon goes out and finds seven others more evil than he is to come possess the man and make him worse off than he ever was before!
27 While he was speaking these things, a woman in the crowd shouted out: Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that nursed you!
28 Jesus answered: Yes--but more blessed are those who hear the Message of God, and keep it!
29 When there was a huge crowd, Jesus told them: This is an evil generation who always seek a sign. The only sign they will get is the sign of Jonah the prophet!
30 For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites [that they must repent or perish], so is the Son of Man a sign to this generation!
31 The Queen of Sheba [--a Gentile--] will rise in resurrection, and at the Last Judgment denounce the men of this generation, for she came all the way from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and a greater than Solomon is here before you!
32 The [Gentile] men of Nineveh will arise in resurrection, and at the Last Judgment will denounce this generation, for *they* repented at the preaching of Jonah; and a greater than Jonah is here before you!
33 No man who has lit a candle hides it in a closet or under a basket--he puts it in a candlestick so everyone who comes in can see by its light.
34 Now the light to the body is the eye. [When you see and operate through eyes of unselfishness and compassion, the whole body has light to see clearly by. But when you see through eyes of greed and selfishness, the whole body walks in darkness and deception.]
35 Watch out that the light in you is not actually the darkness of deception!
36 So if your whole body is full of light, with no darkness, then you will be filled with [enlightenment] as if a candle were lighting your way.

37 As Jesus spoke, a [Shammaiite] Pharisee asked him to come have dinner in his house. Jesus agreed, and reclined to eat in his house.
38 But Jesus did not perform the usual ceremonial hand-washing before reaching for food, and the Pharisee couldn't believe it.
39 The Lord realized this, and said: You Pharisees are good at cleaning the outside of things, but your inside is full of barbarism and wickedness.
40 You fools! Did not He who made the outside make the inside too? [So cleanse the inside as well!]
41 For instance, give alms out of the compassion that should live *in* you, and not out of commandment, and you will be clean inside and out, and everything will be clean *to* you!
42 But woe to you Pharisees, for you tithe to the last kernel of grain, while totally missing the "law" of justice and God's love! You should have learned to do all with equal zeal [and then your tithes would be pure offerings]!
43 Woe to you Pharisees, for you love the best seats in the synagogue, and crave being greeted with honor in the marketplace!
44 Woe to you hypocrite Torah teachers and Pharisees! You are like graves covered over by grass--you defile people coming into contact with you without their even knowing it!
45 Then answered one of the Torah teachers: Teacher, in speaking as you do [against the Pharisees], you also insult us.
45 [*Alternate reading*]: Then answered one of the [Hillelite] Torah teachers: Teacher, in speaking as you do [against the Shammaiites], you also insult us.
46 Jesus answered: Then woe to you Torah teachers as well! For you fail to stand against the crushing load of legalism around you, and do nothing to lift it off the backs of the people!
47 Woe to all of you! For you erect monuments to the prophets your fathers killed!
48 Yet your own deeds show you agree with everything they did! They kill, while you build the tombs of their victims--but you're both the same!
49 God, in His wisdom, warned you and prophesied: *I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute*.
50 [Now the full fruition of that prophecy is at hand!] The blood of all the prophets ever slain will now fall on this generation of people:
51 From the blood of Abel [in the first scroll of the Scriptures], to Zechariah ben Berechiah [in the last scroll of the Scriptures] who was slain between the altar and the Temple--I tell you, all their blood shall be on your heads!
52 Woe to you expositors of the Torah! [You usurped the Scriptures to your own perverted interpretations, then tried to keep others from entering into the truth where you, yourselves, would not go!]
53 As Jesus was saying these things, the outraged religious leaders all started shouting questions, trying to get him to take their bait,
54 And say something they could use against him.

LUKE CHAPTER 12

1 Meanwhile, when an enormous crowd so thick that they were piling atop one another had gathered, Jesus began to speak first to the disciples. He told them: Beware the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.
2 For in the end, there is nothing covered that shall not be uncovered for all to see, neither will there be anything hidden that will remain a secret.
3 So whatever you have spoken in darkness will be heard in the light; and the things you whispered in secret will be shouted from the housetops for all to hear.
4 And I tell you, my friends, don't fear men who can only take your physical life and then can do no more.
5 I'll tell you whom you should fear: Fear God, who--after He has slain the body--can cast you into hell! Yes, fear *Him*!
6 Aren't five sparrows sold for a couple of copper pieces, yet God has His eye on every one of them?
7 God even knows the exact number of hairs on your head, and that's how much He cares about *you*! So don't fear, because you are worth more than many sparrows to Him.
8 I also tell you that whoever shall acknowledge me before men, him shall the Son of Man acknowledge before the angels of God.
9 But he who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God.
10 And whoever slanders the Son of Man can be forgiven, but whoever slanders the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven.
11 And when they bring you into the synagogues to accuse you, or hand you over to magistrates or sovereigns, don't plan beforehand what you will say to defend yourself.
12 For the Holy Spirit will show you what to say in the same hour you need it.
13 Someone in the crowd said: Master--tell my brother to give me my share of our family inheritance!
14 Jesus replied: Sir--who made me a judge or arbiter over you and your brother?
15 Jesus then spoke up for all to hear: Take care that you avoid greed, for what counts in life is not how many material possessions you have!
16 Then Jesus spoke a parable: A rich man once took in a great harvest from his fields.
17 And he thought to himself, *What shall I do? I have so much abundance that I can't store it all!*
18 *I know--I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. Then all my grain and goods will be safe in storage.*
19 *Then I will be able to say to myself, "You have enough stored to last you many years, so relax. Eat, drink, and be merry!"*
20 But God heard this, and said to him: "You fool--this night you will die, and then who will make use of what you stored up for yourself?"
21 Jesus concluded: That's typical of the fate of a man who works for his own earthly profit instead of working for God [and storing up treasure in heaven]!
22 And he told the disciples: This is why I tell you to take no thought for your earthly life, or what you'll eat, or your body and what clothes you'll wear.
23 Life is more than food, and the body more than clothing.
24 Take the ravens: They don't sow or reap. They have no granaries or barns, yet God feeds them every day. How much more important are you than mere birds in God's eyes?
25 And which of you, by worrying, can add even one hour to his life?
26 If you can't do a simple thing like that, why are you so worried about the future? [The future is in God's hands.]
27 Consider the lilies and how they grow in the fields: They don't work, they don't spin cloth--yet I tell you that Solomon's clothing, in all its splendor, wasn't as beautiful as *their* coverings!
28 If God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is used for kindling, how much more will he clothe *you*, you doubting men of little faith?!
29 So don't spend all your time focusing on what you'll eat and drink--and don't let your mind cause you to worry about it.
30 That's what the Gentile nations [which have no hope] do. But you have a Father who knows and cares about your needs.

31 So make the Kingdom of God your primary concern, and all you need will be added to you.
32 Don't be afraid, my little flock--it is your Father's delight to give you the Kingdom.
33 Sell what you have and give to the needy, thus storing your earthly treasure not in a pouch that can wear out, but in a *heavenly* place where it will be safe from loss, where no thief can get to it, and it does not get eaten by moths.
34 For where your treasure is, your heart will be too.
35 Be like vigilant servants who are dressed and have lanterns lit,
36 Ready for their master's return from the wedding, so when he arrives and knocks on the door they can open for him immediately [and show him they are fully prepared].
37 Blessed are those servants whom their master finds on watch. I tell you their master will put on an apron, seat his servants, and serve *them* dinner!
38 Even if he comes at midnight, or before dawn, blessed are the servants he finds waiting in preparation for him!
39 Remember this: If the owner of a house had known what time a thief was coming, he would have stayed up and kept watch for him so his house wasn't burgled.
40 Likewise, you keep on your toes, for the Son of Man will come at an hour when *you're* not expecting him.
41 Peter asked: Lord--is this warning for us, or for everyone?
42 The Lord answered: Who then is the faithful and wise sort of servant whom his lord can trust with the authority to feed the underlings of his household?
43 Blessed is the servant whom his lord finds doing that upon his arrival.
44 I tell you truly, the master of that servant will make him ruler over all that he has!
45 But if that servant thinks in his heart, "My master is delaying his return," then mistreats the men and women under him, and goes out and gets drunk--
46 The lord of that servant will return on a day when the servant isn't looking for him, and at an hour the servant doesn't expect, and his fate will be to be quartered, and punished with the unbelievers!
47 That servant, who knew what his lord's will was and ignored it, shall be punished greatly.
48 But the servant who didn't know, and yet did things worthy of punishment, will have a light punishment. Because one who is given a lot, has a lot required of him. And he who has been entrusted with much is expected to do much.
49 I have come to set the world afire, and how I wish that fire were already kindled!
50 But I have a baptism yet to undergo, and I must bear its burden until all is completed.
51 Did you think I had come to bring peace to the earth? [No, not yet!] I have come to bring division, not unity.
52 From now on, there will be a household of five--and three will be divided against two, and two against three.
53 *The father shall be at odds with the son, and the son against the father. The mother will be against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother. The mother-in law-will be against the daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against the mother-in-law.*
54 And Jesus said to the crowd: When you see a cloud coming from the west, you immediately know, and say, "Rain is coming!" And it does.
55 When a wind blows in from the south, you say, "It's going to get hot!" And it does.
56 You hypocrites! You can read the signs in nature, but why can't you perceive the signs of the times you're in?
57 Why can't you even judge right from wrong among your own selves?
58 If someone sues you and you're both on your way to court--settle with him before the judge intervenes, because if you're in the wrong, the judge may hand you over to the jailer, and he will cast you into Debtor's Prison!
59 I tell you that once you find yourself there, you won't get out of prison until you find a way to pay off every cent of what you owe. [And how could you do that from behind bars?]

LUKE CHAPTER 13

1 Around that time, some there told Jesus about a group of Galilean Jews whom Pilate had slain as they made sacrificial offerings.
2 Jesus' response was: Do you think these men suffered such because they were worse sinners than any other Galileans?
3 No! But I tell you that if you all do not repent, your end will be just as bad.
4 Or how about the eighteen Jews who were killed when the tower of Siloam collapsed? Do you think they were worse sinners than any other men in Jerusalem?
5 In both cases, no. [Bad things happen to even the best people!] But I tell you that if you all do not repent, you will perish in like manner.
6 Jesus then spoke a parable: A man had a fig tree in his orchard, and he came looking for fruit but never found any.
7 So he told his overseer: For three years, I've been looking for this fig tree to bear some fruit, and there is none. Why let it take up space in my orchard anymore? Cut it down [and plant a new tree]!
8 The overseer answered: Lord, give it one more year. I'll dig a watering trench around it, and fertilize it.
9 And if it bears fruit next season, fine. If not, then you can cut it down [and be rid of it in favor of a new seedling that will bear the fruit you want].
10 During a Sabbath, Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues.
11 At the back of the synagogue was a hunchbacked woman who could not straighten up. She had been in that state for eighteen years because of a demon that caused the condition.
12 When Jesus caught sight of her, he called her over to him, and said: Woman--you are freed from your infirmity!
13 Then he laid hands on her, and instantly she stood up and praised God.
14 However, the chief rabbi of the synagogue was offended that Jesus had healed non-life-threatening disease on the day of Rest, and he grumbled to the assembly: There are six days a man is allowed to work--come be healed on those days, and not on the Sabbath when God commands rest!
15 But the Lord answered: You hypocrite! Doesn't each one of you lead your animals out from the stall to be watered on the Sabbath when, by your own words, you're commanded to rest?
16 Ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound for eighteen years, be freed from bondage on the Sabbath day?
17 When Jesus said this, his opponents were put to shame, and the people rejoiced for the miracles he did.
18 Then Jesus said: What does the Kingdom of God resemble? What can I liken it to?
19 It's like a grain of mustard seed that a man cast into his garden. That small seed grew into a large tree, and the birds of the air made their nests in it.
20 And he repeated: To what shall I liken the Kingdom of God?
21 It's like a pinch of yeast that a woman kneaded into three cups of flour until the whole dough was completely leavened [and then overflowed the bowl]!
22 And Jesus went through the towns and villages, teaching and making his way toward Jerusalem.

23 Someone asked: Lord--are there only a few who are saved? And Jesus answered:
24 Endeavor to enter in at the narrow gate--for I tell you that many will want to enter in, but shall not be able.
25 When the master of the house decides the time has come and rises up to bar the door closed, people will stand outside knocking and calling out, “Lord! Lord! Open up for us!” But he will answer, “I don’t know where you come from!”
26 Then you’ll try to say, “But we ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets!”
27 But he will say, “I tell you, I don’t know where you come from! Leave me, all you workers of iniquity!”
28 Yes, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with the prophets, enjoying the Kingdom of God while you, yourselves, are cast out of it!
29 [Gentiles] from the four corners of the earth outside of Israel will sit down in the Kingdom of God too!
30 And there are some [Gentiles] who were last that shall be made first, and there are some [Jews] who were first, that will be made last.
31 That same day, some Pharisees came, and warned Jesus: You better leave the area fast, for Herod Antipas wants to kill you!
32 But he told them: Go tell that “Fox” I plan to cast out demons and heal for the next two days, and on the third day what I have come to do will be complete!
33 Nevertheless, I must continue on the journey today and tomorrow and the next day, for it will not do for a prophet to die outside of Jerusalem.
34 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets, and stones those whom God sends to you! How often would I have gathered your people as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you refused!
35 Look, for now your Temple will be left in desolation, and I assure you, you will not see me again until the day comes that you [and your leaders say of me], “Blessed is he who comes in the Name of the Lord!”

LUKE CHAPTER 14

1 It came to pass one Sabbath day that Jesus went into the house of a chief Pharisee to eat an uncooked meal, and they watched him.
2 Now a man was present who was stricken with swollen limbs.
3 Jesus asked the experts on the Law, along with the Pharisees: Does the Torah allow healing on the Sabbath day?
4 But they were silent. So he took the man, healed him, and released him.
5 Then he spoke to the people there, saying: Which of you who has a donkey or ox wouldn’t think twice about pulling it out if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath?
6 And they had no answer to that point.
7 He then spoke a parable about those invited there, whom he observed sought the best seats at the table:
8 When any man invites you to a wedding banquet, don’t sit in the seat nearest the host, lest he call for someone he esteems more than you,
9 And you face the man who invited you both bringing him up, telling you: “Please let this man have your seat.” Then you, embarrassed, will have to take a seat at the bottom of the table, furthest from the host.
10 When you’re invited, go sit in the worst seat, and then he who invited you will come and say, “Friend, come sit up here!” Then you will be honored in front of the other dinner guests.
11 For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, but he who *humbles* himself will be exalted.
12 Then Jesus told the man who had invited *him* there: When you have a banquet, don’t call your friends, or family, or your rich neighbors--anyone who can possibly return the favor.
13 Instead, when you host a banquet, invite the poor, the maimed, the crippled, and the blind,
14 And you will be blessed by God--for they cannot return the favor--and at the resurrection of the just you will be rewarded.
15 When one of those eating at the table heard these things, he exclaimed to him: Blessed is he who eats bread in the Kingdom of God!
16 Then Jesus said in response to him: A man once held a great banquet, and invited many guests.
17 When it was ready, he sent out his servant to those who were invited, saying, “Come--everything is ready!”
18 But they all began to make excuses not to come. The first said, “I just bought some property and must go see it. Please excuse my absence.”
19 Another said, “I just bought five yoke of oxen and need to test them out. Please excuse my absence.”
20 A third said, “I am on my honeymoon, and can’t attend.”
21 So the servant returned, and told these things to his master. The master of the estate was furious at this, and told the servant, “Go out into the streets and alleys of the city and invite everyone you see: the homeless, the crippled, the lame, and the blind--invite them all here to feast!”
22 The servant did this and reported to his master, “Lord, it is done as you ordered, but there are still empty seats.”
23 So the master told the servant, “Go out of town, and compel anyone you come across in the fields or on the roads to come--I will have my house filled!
24 “I tell you that none of those who were invited shall even taste my banquet!”
25 There was a great crowd with Jesus, and he turned to them, saying:
26 If any man comes to me and doesn’t hate by comparison his parents, wife, children, brothers and sisters--and yes, even his own life as well--he cannot be my disciple!
27 Whoever does not pick up his cross and follow me to the end, cannot be my disciple.
28 What man of you, if he sets out to construct a tower, doesn’t first sit down and figure the cost to see if he can afford it?
29 If he doesn’t, he may run short of funds after laying out the foundation. Then he’ll have to stop construction, and everyone who sees it will laugh at his folly,
30 Saying, “This man started to build, but couldn’t afford to finish what he started!”
31 Or what king going to war with another king doesn’t first sit down with his officers and reckon whether his ten thousand troops can defeat the twenty thousand troops of his enemy?
32 And if he can’t, he sends ambassadors to try to broker a peace agreement while his enemy is still a long way off.
33 Likewise, any of you who does not forsake all that he has cannot be my disciple.
34 Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again?
35 It is unfit for either soil or fertilizer, and men simply throw it away! He who can understand--let him understand!

LUKE CHAPTER 15

1 Then the tax collectors and sinners came near to hear Jesus.
2 But the Pharisees and the Torah teachers were offended, and murmured: This man welcomes sinners, and dines with them!
3 So Jesus spoke a parable to them, saying:

4 Which of you, if you have a hundred sheep, won't drop everything and leave the flock of ninety-nine in the wilderness to search until you find a single lost sheep?
5 Then, after you've rescued it, you carry the sheep home on your shoulders, rejoicing.
6 And when you return home, you summon your friends and neighbors, saying to them, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my lost sheep!"
7 I tell you that heaven likewise rejoices more over one lost sinner that repents than it does over ninety-nine just people who have no need of repentance.
8 Or, say a woman loses one of ten silver coins [from her wedding adornment]. Doesn't she light a candle and tear the house apart until she finds it [because it is precious to her]?
9 And when she does, she calls her friends and neighbors to her, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I found my lost coin!"
10 Likewise, the angels of God rejoice over one sinner who repents.
11 Jesus then said: A certain man had two sons.
12 And the younger said to his father, "Father, I don't want to wait until you die to get my inheritance--give it to me now!" So the father divided up the estate.
13 Soon afterward, the son converted it all to cash and left for a distant country where he squandered it all on partying.
14 When the money was gone, a famine happened to strike, and he started to go hungry.
15 So the young man sought work with a man of that country, but the only job he could find was to slop hogs [for a roof over his head].
16 He would have loved to eat some of the [sour] carob pods fed to the hogs, but he wasn't permitted to, and no one gave him anything else.
17 When he came to his senses, he said to himself, "Even my father's hired hands have more than enough to eat--and here I am, starving to death!
18 "I will humble myself, return to my father, and say, 'Father, I have sinned against both [God] and you,
19 "'And am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me as one of your hired hands.'"
20 So he arose and returned to his father. But while he was still a long way off from home, his father [--who had been waiting all this time for him--] had compassion on him, and actually ran to meet *him*, embracing and kissing the boy.
21 The son began his prepared speech, saying, "Father, I have sinned against [God] and you, and am no longer worthy to be called your son--"
22 But his father said to his servants: "Bring out my best robe and put it on him--and give him a [signet] ring, and shoes for his feet!
23 "Also, bring the fattened calf, and slaughter it for a banquet. Let us eat, and rejoice!
24 "For this son of mine who was dead has returned to life. He was lost, but now he's found!" So they began to throw a great party.
25 Now the older son was out working in the field, and as he was returning to the house he heard the sound of music and merriment.
26 So he called one of the village children, and asked what was going on.
27 He was told: "Your brother has come home, and your father has killed the wheat-fed calf to celebrate his safe return back to him."
28 He was angry at hearing that so he stayed outside, and sulked. His father then came out and urged him to come in to the banquet.
29 But he answered his father: "I have faithfully served you for all my life, and at no time have I ever disrespected you or your commands to me, but you've never so much as given me a goat to barbecue up for my friends!
30 "Yet as soon as this son of yours comes crawling back home after squandering a third of your estate on prostitutes, you serve him up the fattened calf [reserved for esteemed guests, and throw a party in his honor]!"
31 So the father said: "My boy, you are always in my thoughts, and everything I have is yours. [All you had to do was ask, and I would have given you a goat, or anything else, you requested.]
32 "Isn't it only proper that we should celebrate and rejoice over the fact that your brother who was dead is reborn--and the one who was lost has been found again?"

LUKE CHAPTER 16

1 Jesus also spoke to his disciples: There was a rich man who was told that his overseer was wasting his goods.
2 He summoned the overseer, and told him, "What is this I've heard about you?! Get the books together for an audit, and plan on finding another job if this accusation against you is true!"
3 The overseer, knowing he was caught, thought to himself, *What will I do now? My master will fire me for sure. I'm not strong enough to dig ditches, and I refuse to be a beggar!*
4 *I know! I'll ingratiate myself with my master's debtors so after I'm fired they'll owe me a favor!* [*I'm going to be fired anyway, so I'll debit their accounts the portion that would have been my commission. Then they'll love me, and give me a roof over my head!*]
5 So the overseer called every one of his master's debtors to him, and said to the biggest debtor, "How much do you owe my master?"
6 The debtor answered, "A hundred gallons of oil." So the overseer said, "Take this invoice, and write down that you owe only fifty!"
7 The overseer asked another, "How much do you owe my master?" He answered, "A hundred bushels of wheat." So the overseer said, "Take this new invoice, and write that you only owe eighty!"
8 And the master of the overseer commended the crooked overseer for his shrewd thinking. It's thus true that the people of this world are shrewd to a point, even more than the righteous are [who don't rely on such machinations].
9 And I say to you, though money is part of an unrighteous system, use it wisely, in a way God would be pleased with, and you will make friends in heaven who--after the money is gone and your life ended--will welcome you into an *eternal* dwelling place.
10 He who is faithful in the littlest thing will be faithful in more important things. And he who is unjust in the smallest matters will be unjust in greater ones.
11 If you have thus been unfaithful with the unrighteous things like money you have on earth, how can you expect God to place into your trust the true treasures?
12 If you have not been faithful in stewarding someone else's goods, who will give you your own goods to watch over?
13 No servant can serve two masters; he must love the one he will serve, and hate the one he does not serve, and honor one while despising the other. Thus, you cannot serve God [--who wants you to be a giver--] and Mammon [the false god of wealth who wants you to work only to enrich yourself at the expense of others].
14 When the Pharisees, who were greedy businessmen, overheard these statements they mocked Jesus [for they believed material prosperity was a sign of God's approval].
15 But Jesus said: You Pharisees try to look good in the eyes of men, but God knows what's really in your hearts--and in His view, what society highly respects is actually an abomination in His sight!
16 The written Law and the prophets all prophesied until John. Since then, the Kingdom of God has been announced, and people of every sort are pressing into it.

17 Remember, it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than it is for the smallest point of the Law to be overturned
[--even through some so-called "authority of the elders" you claim to have].
18 Therefore [whatever *your* rulings on the subject are], whoever divorces his wife so he can marry someone else is guilty of adultery, and anyone who marries her is likewise guilty of adultery.
19 [Beyond that, listen to this parable:] There was a certain rich man [named Nineue] who was clothed in regal garments, and dined sumptuously each day.
20 And there was a beggar named Lazarus who was laid by the gate outside the man's house. He had many sores from malnutrition.
21 Lazarus yearned just to eat some crumbs off the rich man's table [but was never given any]. Worse, the dogs came and licked his open sores [and he was too weak to even fend them off].
22 Eventually, Lazarus died, and the angels carried him to [Paradise--where Abraham is with the righteous dead]. The rich man died too, and they buried him.
23 In Hades, the rich man lifted up his eyes in torment and saw Lazarus in the distance being comforted by Abraham.
24 And he cried out, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me! Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and touch my tongue with it, for I am tormented in these flames!"
25 But Abraham shouted back, "Son, remember that in your lifetime you received good and Lazarus evil. [You never showed mercy to him when you should have,] so now he is comforted, and your fate is to be tormented!
26 "Besides that, there is a great chasm between us, and no one can pass back and forth."
27 The rich man then said, "Then I beg you, father, to send Lazarus back to my father's house,
28 "To warn my five brothers to repent, lest they wind up in this place of torment!"
29 Abraham answered, "Their warning is in the Scriptures--they can read *them* whenever they want!"
30 But the rich man said, "No, father Abraham--they won't read them or believe them, but if one from the dead comes back and warns them, they'll repent!"
31 Abraham's last words to him were, "If they won't regard the Scriptures, they won't even believe if a man rises from the dead [and warns them]!"

LUKE CHAPTER 17

1 Then Jesus told the disciples: It is inevitable that testing and opposition to my followers will arise, but woe to the one who brings it!
2 It would be better for that man to have an [anchor] tied around his neck and to be thrown into the sea, than that he should cause a young follower of mine to stumble.
3 So watch yourselves. If a fellow believer does some wrong to you, let him know how he has hurt you. If he repents, forgive [and forget].
4 If he wrongs you seven times a day, and seven times a day comes back saying, "I apologize," forgive him every time!
5 The apostles now said to the Lord: Increase our faith.
6 The Lord replied: If you had faith as small as a mustard seed, you could cause that sycamine tree over there to be plucked up by the roots and be cast into the sea if you spoke the command to it in faith, believing.
7 Now which of you, whose servant comes in from the fieldwork or the pasture, says to him, "Go sit down, and enjoy dinner"?
8 Don't you instead tell the servant, "Go prepare my dinner, and after I've dined, you can have dinner yourself"?
9 Do you praise the servant for doing nothing more than what is expected of him? I think not!
10 So likewise you, when you have done all that God commands you to, should have an attitude that says, "We are nothing special--we are only servants doing our duty!" [When you understand that, faith--no matter how
small--will help you to effectively do what God has ordained you to.]
11 In time, Jesus passed along the border of Samaria and Galilee on his way to Jerusalem.
12 And as he entered a village, ten lepers met him, and stood a distance from him.
13 They cried out: Jesus! Master! Have mercy on us!
14 When Jesus saw them, he said: Go to the Temple and show yourselves to the priests. As they were on their way to do that, their diseases were cleansed, and dried up.
15 One man, when he saw that he was healed, came back to Jesus and shouted praise to God for the miracle.
16 Then he fell face down at Jesus' feet and thanked him. This man was a Samaritan, by the way.
17 Jesus looked about, and said: I thought there were ten men cleansed. Where are the other nine?
18 Only one--a Samaritan "stranger" at that--has returned to give God glory.
19 So Jesus told the Samaritan: Arise, and go your way--your faith has made you whole! [And his skin became as if he had never had leprosy.]
20 Now later, the Pharisees came to Jesus and demanded to know when the Kingdom of God would appear [since they knew Jesus had been claiming it was being offered to them]. But Jesus answered and said to them: The Kingdom of God will not start as something you can see with your eyes. [That's why you all make the mistake of thinking expelling the Romans from Israel is the real proof the Kingdom of God has arrived!]
21 No one will say, "You can see it here," or, "You can see it there." The Kingdom of God [starts with the human heart].
22 Jesus told the disciples: The days [of persecution] will come when you will yearn to see one of the wonderful days of the Kingdom that the Son of Man has promised will come, and he will reign in. But you will not see that happen.
23 They will tell you, "He's here!" or "He's there!" But don't believe it or follow them to see if it's true.
24 For as lightning flashes across the sky from east to west, that's how quickly the Son of Man will return in his Day [and all the earth will see it].
25 But first, he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation of Israel.
26 When the Son of Man *does* return, it will be in days similar to when Noah built the ark.
27 In those days, [they didn't realize judgment was at hand, and] life went on perfectly normal--people marrying and giving in marriage--until the day Noah entered the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all.
28 Likewise, in the day Lot left Sodom, they were eating, drinking, transacting business, planting and building.
29 Yet the same day that Lot left Sodom, fire and brimstone fell down from heaven and destroyed everyone.
30 It will be exactly the same when the Son of Man is finally seen by the world for what he is!
31 In that day, let the man on his housetop not pause to take anything out of the house before fleeing. Let the man in the fields not turn back either.
32 Remember Lot's wife [and how she turned to salt when *she* looked back]!

33 Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it. Whoever shall lose his life will save it.
34 I tell you that in that night two will be sleeping in bed, and one will be received and taken, while the other will be rejected and left behind.
35 Two women will be grinding together. One will be received and taken, while the other will be rejected and left behind.
36 Two men will be out in a field. One will be received and taken, and the other left behind.
37 The disciples asked: Where will they be taken to, Lord? Jesus answered: [To safety above the carnage, as the vultures beneath hover above the battlefield below until the slaughter is over and the feast begins!]

LUKE CHAPTER 18

1 Jesus now spoke a parable to the disciples, illustrating the need for persistent prayer, and not to grow faint:
2 There was once a corrupt judge in a city who had no fear of God, nor respect for man.
3 A widow in that city came to him and [repeatedly] said, "Give me justice against the one who wronged me!"
4 He ignored her for a while, but eventually he said to himself, "I may not regard God nor man,
5 "But this troublesome widow is driving me crazy! I'll give her the justice she asks for, lest she make me look like a fool by her endless public nagging!"
6 And the Lord concluded: Note what the corrupt judge said.
7 [If an unjust judge would give justice to a widow he cared nothing for because of her persistence,] won't God avenge His own elect people who cry out for His help, even if He delays the answer for a long time?
8 I tell you that He will avenge them all at once. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man returns to earth, will his people still have faith in him [or will they have lost their faith, and given up]?
9 Then he spoke this parable about those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others [who did not measure up to their standard]:
10 Two men--a Pharisee and a tax collector--went up to the Temple to pray.
11 The Pharisee stood and prayed like this to himself: "God, I thank you that I am not like the sinners--a thug, an unjust man, or an adulterer. I'm not even like this tax collector!
12 "I fast two days a week, and tithe on all I own!"
13 Meanwhile, the tax collector, standing afar off, would not even lift his eyes up to heaven, but struck his breast, saying, "God--grant atoning mercy to me, the sinner!"
14 I tell you, the tax collector went home with God's approval and forgiveness, rather than the Pharisee. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and everyone who humbles himself will be exalted.
15 Later, women brought their babies for Jesus to touch [and bless], but when the disciples saw this, they criticized them.
16 But Jesus called the children to him, and said: Allow the little children to come to me, and don't hold them back, for the Kingdom of God is made up of ones just like them.
17 And I tell you truly that anyone who does not receive the Kingdom of God [into his heart] like a child will not enter it!
18 Some time later, an important official asked: Good master--what must I do to inherit eternal life?
19 Jesus replied: No *man* is good--only *God* is good!
20 But you know the commandments: Don't commit adultery. Don't murder. Don't [kidnap or rob]. Don't lie about someone. Take care of your father and mother.
21 The official then said: I've kept all these from my youth, on up!
22 When Jesus heard that, he said: There's only one thing you haven't done: Sell all you have, give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, and follow me!
23 When the official heard this, he was very grieved, for he was very rich.
24 When Jesus saw how the man became grieved at this, he said: How hard it will be for those with riches to enter the Kingdom of God.
25 It is easier for a [rope] to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God.
26 Those who heard this asked: Who can be saved then?
27 Jesus said: The things that are impossible for man are fully possible with God!
28 Then Peter said: We've left all, and followed you.
29 And he responded: I tell you truly, no man has left house, parents, brothers, wife or children for the sake of God's Kingdom,
30 Who will not receive much more of these things in this life, and--in the Messianic Age--everlasting life.
31 Then he took the twelve aside, and told them:
Look--we are going to Jerusalem, and all the things the prophets wrote about the Son of Man will come to pass.
32 He will be handed over to the Gentiles, and will be mocked, abused, and spat on.
33 They will whip him and put him to death--but on the third day he will rise again!
34 But the disciples didn't understand anything Jesus told them. It was as if the meaning of Jesus' words was supernaturally hidden from them.
35 Now later, as Jesus approached Jericho, there was a blind man sitting by the side of the road, begging.
36 Hearing the crowd move by, the man [--bar Timaeus--] asked what was happening.
37 They told him that Jesus of Nazareth was coming down the road.
38 When he heard that, he screamed out at the top of his lungs: Jesus--Son of David--have mercy on me!
39 The crowd moving down the road with Jesus tried to silence him, but he screamed out all the louder: Son of David--have mercy on me!
40 Jesus came to a halt, and ordered that the man be brought forth. When they led him over, he asked the beggar:
41 What would you like me to do for you? He said: Lord, let me receive my sight!
42 And Jesus said: Receive your sight then--your faith has saved you!
43 And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, shouting praises to God; and all the people praised God with him when they saw this miracle.

LUKE CHAPTER 19

1 Jesus then entered and passed through Jericho.
2 Now there was a chief tax collector who lived there named Zacchaeus, and he was extremely wealthy.
3 He was curious about who Jesus was, and wanted to catch a glimpse of him, but could not see through the crowd because he was a very short man.
4 So he ran on ahead and climbed into a sycamore tree so he could see Jesus since he was coming that way.
5 When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up, saw him, and said: Zacchaeus, hurry down, for I have a divine appointment to stay at *your* house today!
6 So Zacchaeus quickly climbed down from the tree and received him into his house with joy.
7 When the crowd saw it, they all murmured: He's being the guest of a sinner!

8 But Zacchaeus stood there, and said to Jesus: Lord, I am giving half my wealth to the poor, and if I have obtained money from anyone through false accusations, I am restoring it to him fourfold!
9 Jesus replied to him: Today salvation has come to this house, as Zacchaeus is also a son of Abraham.
10 For the Son of Man has come to seek and save what was lost.
11 As the crowd heard this, he added a parable because he was nearing Jerusalem, and he knew they mistakenly believed he would immediately bring forth the Kingdom of God [and deliver Israel from Rome].
12 So he told them: A [prince] departed for a far country to be corronated king, and he planned to return.
13 Before he left, he called his ten servants and gave each of them an ounce of gold, saying, "Keep charge of my treasures until I return."
14 But the citizens of his lands hated him, and sent a delegation after him that told his father: "We will not have this man reign over us!"
15 When he returned as king, in complete authority of the kingdom, he called for the servants he had given the money to, wishing to see what they had done with it and how much they had earned for him through trading.
16 The first came up, and said, "Lord, I have turned your one ounce of gold into ten ounces!"
17 The King said, "Well done, you good servant! Because you have been faithful with very little, have charge over ten of my cities!"
18 The second came, and said, "Lord, I've turned your one ounce into five ounces of gold!"
19 The King said likewise, "Have charge over five of my cities!"
20 But another came up, and said, "Lord--here is your ounce, which I've kept hidden in a pouch.
21 "I feared you, because you're an austere man who leaves others to take the responsibility for your goods, and then you take from them anything they earn."
22 Then the King told him, "You wicked servant! I will judge you by the words you just spoke! So you knew I was an austere man who lays the responsibility for my goods on the backs of others, and takes from them the profits they make, eh?
23 "Then why didn't you at least put my gold in the bank so I could get some interest? [You have shown yourself to be totally useless!]"
24 Then the King said to his guards, "Take his ounce of gold and give it to the man who made ten ounces!"
25 And the guards said, "Lord--he already has *ten* ounces!"
26 The King replied: "Everyone who has will be given more, and he who doesn't have shall see taken away from him whatever he seems to have!
27 "Now as for those enemies of mine who said they would not have me to rule over them--bring them here, and slay them before my eyes!"
28 After he had spoken this, Jesus led the way, ascending to Jerusalem.
29 And as he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he called two disciples, and told them:
30 Go into that village over there, and as you enter it you will find a donkey tied up that no one has ever ridden before. Untie it, and bring it here.
31 If anyone asks, "Why are you untying the donkey?" say to them, "Because the Lord has need of him!"
32 So they went out and found it as Jesus had said.
33 And indeed, as they were untying the donkey, its owners accosted them and demanded to know: Why are you untying the donkey?!
34 They replied: The Lord has need of him!
35 So they brought the donkey to Jesus, placed their cloaks upon its back, and sat Jesus upon it.
36 And as Jesus went, the people tossed their cloaks on the road before the beast.
37 When he had come to the peak of the Mount of Olives and began the descent, all Jesus' disciples loudly began to shout praises to God for all the miracles they had seen,
38 Saying: **Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest**.
39 Some of the Pharisees in the crowd were offended, and said: Teacher--rebuke your disciples!
40 But Jesus answered: I assure you that if *they* keep silent, the rocks themselves will immediately shout out!
41 When he neared the city, he looked upon it and began to cry in grief,
42 Saying: Even if today you had recognized God's peace [and what you should have done to receive it]--but now it is too late, and your eyes are blinded.
43 For the days will come where your enemies will dig a trench around you, and they'll surround you on every side.
44 And they will tear you down to the ground, along with your people inside of you, and they will not leave two bricks cemented together--and all this because you did not recognize the day of your visitation.
45 Jesus then went into the Temple and began to throw out those who bought and sold there,
46 Saying: It is written: *My house is the house of prayer*; but you have made it a den of thieves!
47 And he taught daily in the courts of the Temple, but the chief Sadducee priests, the Torah teachers, and the influential people of the city sought to destroy him.
48 But they didn't know how, for the people hung on every word Jesus spoke.

LUKE CHAPTER 20

1 During one of the days Jesus was teaching at the Temple and preaching the Gospel, the Boethusians [--the elite of the Sadducee priests--] along with the Torah teachers and city elders, finally came to Jesus.
2 They demanded to know: Tell us by what authority you presume to come here and do these things! Or who was it who gave you authority to do these things?!
3 Jesus replied: I'll answer that if you'll answer one thing for me:
4 John's Baptism [and ministry]--did God give it to him, or was it his own invention?
5 And they reasoned how to answer, saying: If we say God gave it to him, he will ask: "Why didn't you believe him then?"
6 But if we say John made it up on his own, we'll be stoned by the people, for they are convinced he was a prophet.
7 So they answered that they didn't know what its origin was.
8 Jesus responded by saying: Then I will not tell you by what authority *I* do these things!
9 Then he told them a parable: A man planted a vineyard, and leased it out to sharecroppers before leaving for a long time to go to a distant country.
10 At harvest time, he sent a servant to the sharecroppers to collect his share of the harvest, but the sharecroppers beat him and sent him back empty-handed.
11 He sent another servant who was also beaten, treated shamefully, and sent back empty-handed as well.
12 So he sent a third. This one was also wounded, and thrown out of the vineyard.

13 Then the lord of the vineyard said, “What shall I do? I know! I’ll send my own beloved son. They may respect *him*, at least, when they see him!”
14 But when the sharecroppers saw the son coming, they huddled together, and said, “This is the heir--let’s kill him, and take the inheritance for ourselves!”
15 So they threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. Now what do you think the lord of the vineyard will do in response?
16 He will come and destroy the sharecroppers, and give the vineyard to others [who will be faithful]. When Jesus’ opponents heard this, they said: God forbid!
17 But Jesus looked them up and down, and said: Then what do you think these verses mean? **The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner**.
18 **Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder**.
19 That did it. The chief Sadducee priests and the Torah teachers realized Jesus was speaking about them directly, and they would have taken him then and there. But they didn’t dare make a move because they feared the crowds.
20 So they watched him, using spies who infiltrated the crowds, posing as righteous men. They hoped to hear something they could use as evidence allowing them to turn Jesus over to the Roman governor to deal with, using his own power and authority [thus absolving them from blame for whatever happened].
21 These spies told Jesus: Master--we know we can count on you to give an honest answer to a question, because you teach the truth of God without respect for what anyone else thinks.
22 Is it acceptable in the Law for us to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?
23 But he knew their craftiness, and said: Why are you trying to trick me?
24 Show me a coin of the tribute. Now whose image and name are on it? They answered: Caesar’s.
25 So Jesus answered: Then give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, but give to God what is God’s!
26 Thus, they could not get Jesus to say anything incriminating in public, and they were so amazed at his answer that they kept silent after that.
27 Then certain of the Sadducees, who deny there is [an immortal soul or] a resurrection of the body, came up,
28 Saying: Master--Moses wrote that if a man dies childless, his brother must marry his wife and provide him an heir so his bloodline doesn’t die out.
29 Now there were once seven brothers, and the first--after marrying the woman he was betrothed to--died childless.
30 So his oldest brother married her, but had no children either.
31 Then he died and the third brother married her, and this pattern continued until all seven men died without the woman’s ever having a child.
32 Finally, the woman died.
33 Now at the resurrection of the dead, which of the seven would be her husband, since they all were married to her?
34 Jesus answered: Humans in this age marry and are given in marriage.
35 But those worthy of entering into that age and the resurrection of the dead, will neither marry nor be given in marriage.
36 They can’t die either, for they are like the angels of God, and are the children of God, being children of the resurrection.
37 But as touching whether there even is [an immortal spirit or] a resurrection of the dead, even Moses showed that there is at the incident of the burning bush, when he called God, “The God who is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”
38 For God is not a God of the dead, but of those who are alive, [for anyone in Him can never die]!
39 Then a few of the [Pharisee] Torah teachers called out: Master, that was a marvelous answer!
40 After that, the Sadducees gave up, and dared not ask more questions.
41 Jesus now asked [the Pharisees]: How is it said that the Messiah is the son of *David*?
42 For didn’t David himself, in the book of Psalms, say: **The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand**,
43 **Till I make thine enemies thy footstool**?
44 [Since, in our culture, a father always outranks his son,] how is it that the Messiah is David’s lord if he is *David’s* son? [The Messiah must thus be the son of a father even greater than David!]
45 Then, in the presence of all the people, Jesus told his disciples:
46 Beware the Torah teachers who wantto wear prayer shawls with long threads, and love to be greeted in the marketplace; and have the most prestigious seats in the synagogue, and the best seats at banquets,
47 Who oppress widows, seizing their homes while making a show of piety outside by their loud public prayers. These will receive greater damnation than the worst sinners!

LUKE CHAPTER 21

1 Jesus then looked up and noted how the rich were casting money into the [trumpet-shaped] collection boxes.
2 Finally, a poor widow came along and cast in two pennies.
3 Jesus said: I tell you truly--of all the people donating, this poor widow gave more than any of them!
4 For they put into the offering boxes to God out of their surplus [after they had paid off all their bills], but she, despite her poverty, gave all that she had to live on.
5 Now some were remarking about how impressed they were with the majesty of the Temple complex, and the way it was built and adorned with carved stones and elaborate gifts consecrated by wealthy patrons to God, but Jesus said:
6 These things you’re looking at--the days will come when not so many as two stones will be left cemented together. All will be thrown down into rubble!
7 So they asked him: Master--when will these things happen? What sign will be happening to show the season is at hand for that?
8 Jesus said: Take care that you are not deceived! As the time draws near, many will come, usurping my position, and saying, “*I* am the Messiah,” and, “The time [of the Kingdom] is near!” Don’t listen to them or follow them.
9 And when you hear about wars and uprisings, don’t be terrified. These things will come, but the end won’t come quite yet.
10 Then he added: Race will battle race, and kingdom will battle kingdom.
11 There will be great earthquakes, famines, and plagues--and fearful sights and great signs in the skies above!
12 But before all this, they will capture and persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues [and their religious tribunals], and into prisons; and you’ll be taken before kings and governors for [proclaiming who and what I am].
13 But all these persecutions will be an opportunity to testify of me.
14 So don’t decide beforehand to plan what your defense will be,
15 For I [through the Spirit] will give you the words of wisdom to speak that no one will be able to counter.
16 You will be betrayed by parents, brothers, relatives and friends, and some of you they will even cause to be put to death.
17 All men will hate you for your being my ambassadors and heralds of who and what I am.

18 But not so much as a hair of your head will be lost.
19 [By standing firm in your faith, you will deliver your souls from *true* death!]
20 And when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, know that its destruction has come.
21 Let all who are in Judea escape to the mountains, and let those in the city run for their lives. But let no one in the country go to Jerusalem for refuge!
22 For those will be the days of vengeance, so everything that has been prophesied in Scripture will be fulfilled.
23 Woe to those who are pregnant then, and those who nurse infants. At that time will be great distress in the land, and great wrath unleashed upon this people.
24 And the Jews will fall to the sword and be led away as captives to all the Gentile nations, and Jerusalem will be in the control of the Gentiles until the Age of the Gentiles has ended.
25 And [when that Age ends,] there will be things seen in the sun, the moon, and the stars that have never been seen before, while on the earth mankind will be perplexed and powerless to stop nature from turning itself inside and out. Tidal waves will roar across the seas.
26 Men's hearts will stop out of sheer terror for what they see happening on earth, for the demonic entities in the heavens will be shaken [and cast down to perdition--and the entire universe will heave to and fro with their downfall].
27 Then everyone shall see the Son of Man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory.
28 So when you see these things start to happen--look up and lift your heads, for your redemption is at hand!
29 Jesus then spoke a parable: Consider the fig tree, and other sorts of trees.
30 When they sprout leaves, you know summer is near.
31 In the same way, when you begin to see these things happen, know that the Kingdom of God is at hand.
32 I tell you truthfully, the generation that sees these things will not pass away before everything will be fulfilled.
33 The entire universe and the earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.
34 And take care that you not get lazy, letting your hearts lead you into dissipation, drunkenness, easy living, and worrying about the cares of this life--lest the day catch you by surprise [for it will be too late to repent at that time].
35 That day will come as fast as a trap catches an animal to those dwelling upon the face of the earth.
36 Keep watch then, and pray always that you will be counted worthy to escape the things that will be coming, and to stand before the Son of Man!
37 Now Jesus would teach in the Temple during the day, and at night he would go out to the Mount of Olives to camp on its slopes.
38 And everyone came early in the morning to hear him preach at the Temple.

LUKE CHAPTER 22

1 [Now the feasts of Passover and Unleavened bread had come.]
2 And the chief Sadducee priests and the Torah teachers debated how to kill Jesus safely, for they feared the people.
3 Satan then entered Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve apostles.
4 And he went out and conspired with the chief priests and the Temple officers to betray Jesus to them.
5 Jesus' enemies rejoiced at this, and agreed to pay Judas a bribe for his aid.
6 So Judas agreed to betray Jesus at a time when the crowds weren't around him.
7 Then came the days of Unleavened Bread, and the time when the Passover lamb was slain.
8 Jesus sent Peter and John into Jerusalem, telling them: Go prepare our Passover so we may eat the lamb.
9 They asked: Where do you want us to prepare it?
10 Jesus answered: When you go into town, a man carrying a pitcher of water will meet you. Follow him to the house he goes into.
11 Tell the owner of the house, "The Master asks, 'Where is the guest chamber where I can eat the Passover with my disciples?'"
12 He will show you a large furnished room on an upper floor. Prepare there.
13 So the two went. It happened as Jesus had said, and they made preparations to hold their Passover *seder*.
14 Then, when the hour had come, Jesus reclined at the table along with the twelve apostles.
15 Jesus said: I have been anxious to eat this Passover with you before my time of suffering.
16 For I say to you that I will not eat it again until what it represents is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.
17 And he took the cup, gave thanks, and said: Take this, and each of you drink from it.
18 I tell you, I will not drink wine again [until what this represents is on the earth in its fullness in the Kingdom of God].
19 Then Jesus took bread and blessed God. He broke it and handed it out, saying: This is my body, which is given up for you. Continue eating it in remembrance of me.
20 He said the same about the cup, adding: This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.
21 But look--the hand of my betrayer is with me on the table.
22 It's true that the Son of Man will go on to what awaits him, as it was determined--but woe to that man who is betraying him to that!
23 The disciples then began wondering among themselves who would be the betrayer.
24 Then they fell to arguing over which was the most important of them.
25 Jesus watched this, and said: Gentile kings act like gods over their subjects, and the people esteem them for their position and call them benefactors.
26 But you must not be like that! He that is the most important of you must think of himself as no greater than a teacher's youngest pupil. And the one who considers himself the leader must prove it by being the greatest servant to the rest.
27 For [normally] who is more important? The one who sits and eats, or the servant who brings the meal? The one who sits and eats, right? Yet here I am as the servant [so follow my example].
28 You are the ones who have stood with me during my trials.
29 And I appoint for you a kingdom as my Father has reserved one for me,
30 So you can eat and drink at my table, in my kingdom, and then occupy twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.
31 The Lord then spoke to Peter, saying: Shimon! Shimon! Satan has plotted against you [all], to try to sift you like wheat.
32 But I have prayed that your faith not fail you, and when you have found yourself and turned back, strengthen your brothers.
33 But Peter replied to him: Lord, I am ready to go with you to the dungeon and to death if need be!
34 Jesus replied: Peter, the "rooster" won't crow this morning before you deny knowing me three times!
35 And he added: When I sent you out with nothing but the clothes on your backs, what did you wind up lacking? They answered: Nothing.

36 Then he said to them: Now things are different. He who has a purse, let him carry it [along with his money]. He who has no sword, let him sell his cloak and buy one.
37 For I tell you, this prophecy in Scripture must be fulfilled in me: **And he was reckoned among the transgressors**. The things prophesied about me are coming to a head [and you may need to protect yourselves].
38 They said in response: Look, Lord--we have two swords here. Jesus replied: Those will be enough.
39 Then Jesus departed, and as was his custom he went to the Mount of Olives, his disciples following along.
40 When he arrived at his destination, he said to the disciples: Pray that you won't fall into temptation.
41 Jesus then went ahead a few yards, and knelt down to pray,
42 Saying: Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but Your will be done.
43 Then an angel from heaven appeared and strengthened him.
44 Being in great agony, Jesus prayed more earnestly, and sweat great drops of blood that fell to the ground.
45 When he rose up from prayer and came back to the disciples, he found them asleep, their grief having sapped the strength from them.
46 And he asked them: Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray, lest temptation get the better of you!
47 While he was speaking, a crowd of people led by Judas drew near, and Judas came up to kiss Jesus in greeting.
48 But Jesus said to him: Judas--do you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?
49 When the disciples realized what was happening, they cried out: Lord--do we use the swords?!
50 Then [Peter] struck a servant of the High Priest, cutting off his right ear.
51 Jesus answered: No more! And he touched the man's ear, and healed it.
52 Then Jesus said to the chief priests, officers, and city elders who had come for him: So you come out, armed to the teeth with sword and clubs, like you're on the hunt for some bandit?
53 When I was at the Temple every day, you didn't lay a hand on me, but this is your hour, and the zenith of the Power who rules over Darkness.
54 Then they took him off to the High Priest's palace. Peter, meanwhile, followed from a safe distance to see what would happen.
55 When the crowd had kindled a bonfire in the courtyard, Peter managed to sit down and mingle with them.
56 But a maid saw him by the light of the fire, and fixed her gaze upon him. She said: This man was with him too!
57 Peter immediately denied it, saying: Woman, I don't know him.
58 After a little while, someone else saw him, and said: You're also one of them! Peter replied: Sir, I am not!
59 After about an hour, someone else said confidently: I'm sure this man was with him, for he's a Galilean!
60 Peter responded: Sir, I have no idea what you're talking about! And as he said this, the "rooster" cried out.
61 It was then that the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered what the Lord had said: "The 'rooster' won't crow before you deny me three times!"
62 And Peter went off and wept bitterly.
63 Meanwhile, the men holding Jesus mocked and struck him.
64 And when they had blindfolded him, they pummeled his face, and said: Prophesy the name of the man who struck you!
65 And many other blasphemous things they spoke against him.
66 When dawn came, the elders of the people, along with the most important priests and the Torah teachers, led Jesus into the chamber of their impromptu sanhedrin. They asked:
67 Are you the Messiah? Tell us! And Jesus replied: If I tell you, you won't believe;
68 And if I try to defend myself by questioning *you*, you will neither answer me nor let me go.
69 From now on, the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the Power of God.
70 Then they all said: So you *are* the Son of God? And he said back: You're proving that I am!
71 So they said: Who needs more witnesses or evidence? We've heard him blaspheme out of his own mouth!

LUKE CHAPTER 23

1 Then the whole crowd rose up and dragged Jesus off to Pilate.
2 Once there, they began to make accusations against him, saying: We found this man troubling the nation, and forbidding taxes to be paid to Caesar, saying that he, himself, is the Messiah--a king!
3 So Pilate asked: Are *you* the King of the Jews?! Jesus answered: You said it!
4 Then Pilate said to the chief Sadducee priests and the crowd: I find no fault in this man.
5 Then they became even more raucous, saying: By his teaching, he's been stirring up all the Jews, starting from Galilee to here!
6 When Pilate heard the word "Galilee," he asked if Jesus were a Galilean.
7 When they affirmed this, he decided Jesus was Herod Antipas' responsibility, so he sent him off to Herod, who happened to be in Jerusalem for Passover.
8 When Jesus arrived, Herod was delighted, for he had long wanted to see him, having heard a lot about him. He also hoped Jesus would show him a miracle.
9 So Herod interrogated him with many questions, but Jesus wouldn't even dignify him with an answer.
10 Meanwhile, the chief priests and the Torah teachers had no shortage of vehement accusations to make against *him* to Herod.
11 Then Herod and his officers set Jesus before them, and mocked him. After putting an elegant robe on him, they returned him to Pilate.
12 That same day, Herod and Pilate became fast friends. Before this, they were enemies.
13 And Pilate, when he had summoned the chief Sadducee priests, the elders, and the people,
14 Told them: You bring this man to me, and claim he is stirring up an insurrection among the people, but after listening to your charges, I have ruled that he is guiltless of the things you accuse him of.
15 Herod must apparently concur, since I sent you to him, and he returned Jesus alive [--and we know his usual treatment for those threatening him].
16 I will therefore whip him and set him loose [instead of applying a death sentence].
17 For it was a custom at each Feast to give clemency to someone.
18 And they all cried out on the spot: Take this man away! Release bar Abbas instead!
19 Now this bar Abbas was in the dungeon for causing a riot in Jerusalem, and committing murder.
20 Pilate, who still wanted to release Jesus, spoke again, trying to convince them.
21 But they just shouted out: Crucify him! Crucify him!
22 For the third time Pilate spoke, saying: Why? What evil has he done? I haven't found anything he's done that is worthy of the death penalty. I will therefore whip him, and then release him.

23 But they shouted back, insisting on crucifixion. And the voices of the crowd and the chief priests prevailed.
24 Pilate thus gave them the sentence they sought.
25 So he released from prison the seditious murderer they called for, and consigned Jesus to be treated as they demanded.
26 Then the Romans led him away, but they collared a man from Cyrene named Simon, who was coming into town from the country, and laid the cross upon him since Jesus was too exhausted to carry it further. So Simon bore the cross behind Jesus as he walked.
27 A great crowd of people also walked behind, including some women who wailed over what was happening.
28 But Jesus turned to them, saying: Daughters of Jerusalem, don't cry for me--cry for you and your children.
29 For the days are coming when they will say, "Blessed are the sterile, and the women who have never given birth and nursed children!"
30 People will then say to the mountains, "Fall on us!' And to the hills they'll say, "Cover us!"
31 [For if the Romans do these things in the spring, when the tree is green and God's grace has reached out to you, what will they do when the tree dries in winter and God's grace abandons you?]
32 Two other criminals were also led out to be crucified with him.
33 And when they came to the place called Calvary, they crucified him with the criminals on either side of him.
34 Then Jesus said: Father, forgive them--for they don't know what they're doing. Then the guards divided his clothing, and diced for it.
35 And the people stood watching this. The rulers were there with them, jeering: He saved others--let him save himself if he is the so-called 'Anointed One,' the Chosen of God.
36 And the soldiers mocked him as well, coming forward to offer him some non-kosher vinegar wine,
37 And saying: If you're the King of the Jews, save yourself!
38 A sign was nailed over Jesus' head that said in Greek, Latin and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.
39 [Hearing the crowd and seeing the sign,] one of the criminals who was being crucified lashed out at Jesus, saying: If you *are* the Messiah, save yourself *and* us!
40 But the other rebuked him, saying: Have you no fear of God, knowing we are both going to die this day?
41 And we deserve it for what we've done. But this man did nothing to warrant being here.
42 Then the man said to Jesus: Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom.
43 Jesus answered: I tell you in all truth, today you be with me in Paradise.
44 It was about noon, and a great shadow was over all the earth until about 3 PM.
45 And the sun was dark. Then the curtain in the Holy of Holies was torn down the middle [and the doors of the Temple blew open]!
46 And when Jesus cried out in a loud voice, he said: Father, into your hands I commit my spirit. Having spoken that, Jesus let go, and released his spirit in death.
47 Now when the centurion overseeing the crucifixion saw this, he glorified God, saying: This man must certainly have been righteous!
48 All the people who had come to [Calvary] saw these events and smote their breasts in grief. Then they returned to Jerusalem.
49 And all Jesus' acquaintances, and the women who followed him from Galilee, stood a distance away, watching all this.
50 Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the Great Sanhedrin, who was a good and just man.
51 This same man had opposed what the quorum formed against Jesus ruled and did. He was from the city of Arimathaea [Ramallah], a Judean city; and he was one of those who awaited the arrival of the Kingdom of God.
52 He went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body.
53 Then he took it down, wrapped it in fine linen, and had it lain in a new stone sepulcher where no one had ever been interred before. [So it was not an unclean sepulcher.]
54 Now this was the preparation day, and the Sabbath drew on.
55 And the women from Galilee followed along and saw the sepulcher and how Jesus' body was laid in it.
56 They returned home and prepared spices and ointments. But they rested until the Sabbath had passed, as the commandment required.

LUKE CHAPTER 24

1 Very early Sunday morning, the women and a few others returned to the tomb with the spices they had prepared.
2 They found the stone rolled away from the tomb's entrance.
3 Then they entered in, but did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.
4 As they stood about, very perplexed, two men appeared in sparkling clothing.
5 As they fell prostrate before them, being terrified, the men said: Why are you looking for the living among the dead?
6 He is not here, but has risen! Don't you remember how he told you of this in Galilee,
7 Saying, *The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified, and on the third day he will rise again*?
8 Then they remembered Jesus' words.
9 So they returned from the tomb, and told all this to the eleven, along with the other followers of Jesus.
10 It was Mary of Magdala, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and some other women with them who told the apostles about this.
11 But their words sounded like women's rambling, so they would not believe them.
12 But Peter got up and ran to the tomb. When he got there, he stooped down to look in and saw the linen wraps laid down by themselves. He then left, wondering what to make of this.
13 That same day, two other of Jesus' followers were heading for Emmaus, which is seven miles from Jerusalem.
14 The pair were discussing recent events.
15 As they walked and talked, another man caught up to them and began walking with them. It was Jesus.
16 But their eyes were supernaturally closed to seeing him for who he was.
17 And Jesus spoke up, saying: What are you talking about as you walk that makes you look so grieved?
18 One of the two, named Cleopas, answered: Where have *you* been? Are you a stranger in Jerusalem, that you don't know what has been happening there over the past few days?!
19 Jesus asked: What sort of things do you mean? So they answered: The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in word and deed before God and all the people.
20 The chief priests and our leaders handed him over to the Romans, who condemned him to death, and they crucified him.
21 We believed that he would be the one who would save and free Israel. It's now three days since he died.
22 The strange thing is, some women of our group told an astounding story about when they visited his tomb early today.
23 They did not find his body, and they claimed they had a vision of angels who told them he was alive.
24 And others we know went to the tomb and found it empty as the women had said, and Jesus was not there. [So we don't know what to think about all this.]
25 Then Jesus said to them: O fools, with hearts slow to believe *all* that the prophets said in the Scriptures…

26 Wasn't the Messiah *supposed* to suffer these things before entering into his glory?!
27 Then, beginning with Moses' writings and going forward through all the prophets, he showed how the Scriptures foretold all that he would endure.
28 And as they approached the village the two were headed for, he kept walking as though he would continue on.
29 But the pair urged him to come home with them, saying: Stay with us tonight, for evening approaches and the day departs. So Jesus went home to stay with them as they asked.
30 And it came to pass as he sat at dinner with them, that he took bread, blessed and broke it, then gave it to them.
31 Then the mist was gone from their eyes, and they knew at once it was Jesus--but he vanished before they could say a word!
32 Then they said to one another: Didn't our hearts burn inside of us when he talked to us on the road, and explained the Scriptures?
33 So they rushed back to Jerusalem, finding the eleven together with other followers.
34 They were told: The Lord has indeed risen--he appeared to Shimon!
35 Then they shared what had happened during their travels, and how they recognized him when the bread was broken.
36 As they were speaking, Jesus himself appeared in the midst of them, and said: Peace be to you.
37 They were terrified and shocked, thinking it was a spirit.
38 But he said to them: Why are you troubled, and why are such thoughts arising in your hearts?
39 Look at the nail holes in my hands and feet, and see it is I. Touch me, and see. A spirit hasn't got flesh and bones as you see me have.
40 After saying this, he displayed the wounds in his hands and feet.
41 They were so stunned with joy that they couldn't believe their eyes, so he said to them: Is there any meat here to eat?
42 So they gave him a piece of broiled fish and part of a honeycomb.
43 He took these and ate in front of them.
44 And he said: Remember when I was with you before, I told you all the things had to be fulfilled that were prophesied in the books of Moses, the prophets, and in the Psalms about me.
45 Then he opened their understanding so they could understand the Scriptures.
46 And he said to them: Thus it was written, and thus it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and rise from the dead on the third day;
47 And that, in his name, repentance and forgiveness of sins would be preached to all nations, starting in Jerusalem.
48 All of you are witnesses to spread that message.
49 And behold, I will send the promise of my Father [--the power and wisdom of the Holy Spirit--] upon you. But stay in Jerusalem until you receive the power from on High.
50 He led them out as far as Bethany. Then he raised his hands and blessed them.
51 And as he was blessing them, he was parted from them and ascended into heaven.
52 And the disciples worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.
53 And they were continuously in the courts of the Temple, praising and thanking God. Amen.

John

JOHN CHAPTER 1

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word *was* God!
2 He was with God when the universe began.
3 Everything that exists was made by him, and nothing came into existence without him.
4 In him was life, and that life was the light of man.
5 And the Light is shining in the darkness, and the darkness has not extinguished it.
6 Now there was a man sent by God whose name was John [Yochannon].
7 John came to proclaim the Light and lead people to it, that all men might believe through him.
8 John himself was not the Light, but he was sent to bear witness *of* the Light,
9 Which was the true Light that enlightens every man, the Light that comes into the world.
10 He was in the world and made the world, but the world did not know who he was.
11 He came to his own, but his own people would not accept him.
12 But to as many as did accept him and place faith in his person and position, he gave the power to become the sons of God.
13 For these sons were born not of blood, nor through the will of human flesh, but [were born in spirit] through the will of God.
14 And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we beheld his glory--which was the glory of one begotten by the Father, full of grace and truth!
15 John bore witness of him, and proclaimed: This is the one about whom I have been saying, "He who is coming after me is preferred to me, for he existed before me!"
16 And we have all partaken from his fullness, and received [undeserved] grace upon grace.
17 For the Law was given by Moses--but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ!
18 No man has seen God at any time, but the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, has revealed Him to us.
19 Now this is what happened during John's ministry: The Judeans sent priests and Levites to him from Jerusalem, asking: Just who are you?
20 He didn't hold back, and made it clear: I am not the Messiah!
21 So they asked: If you're not the Messiah, who and what are you? Are you Elijah? John said: I am not. So they asked: Then are you the Prophet Moses said was coming [whom all the people were required to hear]? And John answered: No.
22 To this, they said: Then who are you? Tell us who you claim to be so we can report to the elders who sent us.
23 John's answer was: I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, *Make straight the path of the Lord*, as Isaiah prophesied.
24 Now those who had been sent, went out at the behest of the Pharisees.
25 And they asked John: Why are you baptizing if you are not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?
26 John answered: I am immersing in mere water, but there is a man standing amongst you all, whom you don't know.
27 He's the one coming after me, who is preferred to me--a man whose sandal straps I am unworthy to untie.
28 These things happened in Bethabara, beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing people.
29 The next day, John saw Jesus coming to him, and he exclaimed: Behold the [sacrificial] Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!
30 He is the one of whom I said, "After me, a man is coming who is preferred to me, for he existed before me."
31 I did not know who he was, but I knew he was coming to be revealed to Israel, and so I started baptizing with water [as a precursor to his arrival].
32 And John testified about him, saying: I saw the Holy Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and resting upon him.
33 And as I say, I did not know who he was, but [God] who sent me to baptize with water also told me, "The one upon whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who will baptize people with the Holy Spirit."
34 And I saw this happen, and I proclaim that he is the Son of God!
35 The next day, John was standing [at the river] with two of his disciples.
36 He saw Jesus walking in the distance, and once more said: Behold the Lamb of God!
37 The two disciples heard this, and followed after Jesus.
38 Jesus turned and saw them following, and he said: What is it that you are looking for? They answered: Rabbi--which is interpreted as *master*--where are you staying?
39 He said to them: Come and see. So they followed to where he was staying and remained with him that day, for it was around [4 PM].
40 One of the two who had heard John speak, and followed Jesus, was Andrew, Shimon Peter's brother.
41 He went out and found his own brother, Shimon, and told him: "We have found the Messiah"--which, by interpretation, means the *Christ*.
42 So Philip brought Shimon to Jesus, and when Jesus saw him, he said: You are Shimon [meaning a *reed*], the son of Jonah. You will be called Cephas [meaning *stone*].
43 The next day, Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip, and told him: Follow me!
44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city Andrew and Peter [Cephas] were from.
45 Philip went and found Nathanael, and told him: We have found the one Moses and the prophets wrote about in the Scriptures--Jesus of Nazareth, son of Joseph!
46 Nathanael wondered in response: Can any good thing come out of a place like Nazareth? Philip said: Come see for yourself!
47 When they arrived and Jesus saw Nathanael approach, he said about him: Behold! A true Israelite of honesty and integrity!
48 Nathanael replied: Where do you know me from? Jesus answered: Before Philip called you, when you happened to be under the fig tree, I saw you [in a vision].
49 Nathanael answered back: Rabbi--you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!
50 Jesus said in response: Simply because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree you believe in me? You will see much greater things than that before we're done!
51 Truly, truly, I say to you that hereafter you will see heaven revealed, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man!

JOHN CHAPTER 2

1 The third day thereafter, a wedding took place in Cana of Galilee, and Jesus' mother was there.
2 Jesus, along with his disciples, was invited to it.
3 When they ran low on wine, Jesus' mother said to him: They have no wine.

4 Jesus responded: Ma'am--what is that to you and me? My time has not come yet.
5 But his mother told the servants: Do whatever he tells you to.
6 Now there were six stone water pots used for Jewish ritual purification of objects, and they held around twenty gallons each.
7 Jesus ordered the servants: Fill those up with water. So they did, all the way up to the brim.
8 Then Jesus told them: Go ladle some out and take it to the Levite presiding over the feast. So they brought it to the man.
9 When the Levite presiding over the feast tasted the wine created out of the water and didn't know where it came from--though the servants knew--he summoned the groom,
10 And told him: Everyone always puts the best wine out at the beginning of the banquet, and after the guests have drunk their fill, they bring the watered-down wine to finish up with. But you kept the best wine until the end!
11 This was the first of Jesus' miracles, manifesting his glory, that took place in Cana of Galilee; and the event anchored the disciples' faith in him.
12 After this, Jesus, his mother, his kinsmen, and his twelve disciples, went down to Capernaum, but remained there for only a few days.
13 Now the Jewish feast of Passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.
14 At the Temple, he found people selling sacrificial oxen, sheep, and doves, along with changing money
[--and they were actually disrespecting the Temple by *sitting down* while doing these things]!
15 After making a whip of ropes, he lashed them all out of the Court of Gentiles, drove out the sheep and oxen, poured out the money-changers' cash boxes, and overturned their tables.
16 He shouted to the dove sellers: Get these things out of here--don't make my Father's house a place of business!
17 When he did this, the disciples recalled the Scripture verse, **The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up**.
18 The Judeans answered: Just what sign do you have to give us to show your right to do these things?!
19 Jesus replied to them: Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.
20 Then the Judeans spat back: It took forty-six years to build this Temple complex, and you'll raise it up in three days, will you?!
21 But he meant the temple of his body.
22 So after Jesus had risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had told them this, and they believed the Scripture and what Jesus had said [about rising from the dead].
23 Now when Jesus was in Jerusalem at the Passover, by the time the Day of Sacrifice came, many [placed faith in him as Messiah] when they saw all the miracles he did.
24 But Jesus did not trust or rely on them, because he knew the truth about every person he met,
25 And did not need anyone to tell him anything about them, for he, himself, already knew what was in the heart of every man.

JOHN CHAPTER 3

1 There was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a member of the panel in Jerusalem that interpreted Jewish Law.
2 He came secretly by night, and told Jesus: Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who comes from God, for no man can do the miracles you do *unless* God is with him!
3 Jesus answered: Truly, truly, I say to you: Unless a man is born twice, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.
4 Nicodemus then asked: How can an old man be born twice? Can he climb back into his mother's womb, and be born a second time?
5 Jesus answered: Truly, truly, I say to you: Unless a man is born both of water *and* Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God!
6 That which is birthed of flesh is mere flesh. But that which is birthed of the Spirit is spirit.
7 Don't wonder that I said to you, 'You must be born twice.'
8 The wind blows where it wants, and you see and hear its effects, but you can't comprehend where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is birthed through the Spirit.
9 Nicodemus then asked: How can this be the case?
10 Jesus answered: Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you have no knowledge of the concepts I'm expressing?
11 Truly, truly, I say to you: We have testified about what we know and have seen, yet none of you accepts our witness.
12 If I have told you about earthly things and you can't believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things?
13 And no man has ascended into heaven but he who came down from heaven--even the Son of Man who is in heaven.
14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,
15 That whosoever will place faith in him will not perish, but have everlasting life!
16 For God so loved humanity that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever places faith in him will not perish, but have everlasting life!
17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn it, but to save the world through him!
18 He who places faith in him is not condemned, but he who does not place faith in him is already condemned, because he did not believe in the person and position of the only begotten Son of God.
19 And this is what condemns them: That the light came into the world, but men preferred darkness rather than light, as evidenced by the fact that their deeds were evil.
20 For everyone who practices evil hates the light and won't come to it, lest his deeds be shown for what they are [--that they are of Satan].
21 But he who practices truth is drawn to the light so his deeds may be seen for what *they* are: that they are done in God.
22 After these things, Jesus and the disciples went out and encamped in the Judean wilderness, baptizing people there.
23 John was also baptizing in Aenon, near Salim, because there was a lot of water there, and people came there to be baptized.
24 This was before Herod Antipas threw John into a dungeon.
25 Now a question arose between John's disciples and the Judeans about ritual purification [because some were wondering if Jesus' baptism was in conflict with John's].
26 So they came to him, and said: Rabbi--the man who was with you beyond the Jordan, the one you testified about--is baptizing, and the people are all flocking to *him*.
27 John replied: A man can receive nothing
[--such as commission to a ministry--] unless it is given by God in heaven.
28 You, yourselves, recall that I denied being the Messiah, but that I was sent on ahead to announce him.
29 It's the groom who possesses the bride, not the best man. But the best man stands at the groom's side and greatly rejoices when he hears the groom's approaching voice. Thus, I rejoice in this.
30 [And, like the best man, I now step aside, having played my role.] He must grow greater, and I must now recede into the background.
31 He who came from heaven above is above everything. But I, who am of the earth, am nothing more than a man, and can only speak the limited revelations *of* a man. He who is from heaven outranks

everything and everyone [and his revelations and understanding are far greater than my own].
32 And what he has seen and heard [in heaven], he testifies to, but no man accepts what he is testifying about.
33 But anyone who receives his message has made a declaration that he agrees that God is true,
34 For he whom God has sent speaks the very words of God Himself, for God has given him an unlimited amount of wisdom of the Spirit.
35 The Father loves the Son, and has given control of everything to him.
36 He who places faith in the Son has everlasting life, but he who does not place faith in the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God will remain upon him!

JOHN CHAPTER 4

1 When the Lord came to know that the Pharisees were aware that he was baptizing more disciples than John--
2 Though Jesus did not do the baptizing, the disciples did--
3 He left Judea, and returned once more to Galilee.
4 But he was prompted, and so chose, to pass through Samaria to reach his destination.
5 On the way, Jesus came to a city in Samaria called Sychar, which is near the parcel of land that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.
6 Now Jacob's well was there, and Jesus--being exhausted from the long walk--sat on it to rest. It was about [noon].
7 It happened that a Samaritan woman came out to draw water from the well, and Jesus told her: Give me a drink of water.
8 His disciples, you see, had gone into town to buy meat.
9 Then the Samaritan woman said: How is it that you--a Jew--ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink, seeing that you Jews won't even drink out of the same cups we use?
10 Jesus answered back: If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that's asking "Give me a drink of water," you would have asked *him* for water, and he would give you the *real* living water!
11 The woman said: Sir--the water down in the well is too deep to reach without a rope and bucket, so how could you have any living water to give me?
12 Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us this well and drank from it along with his children and livestock? [Even *he* needed a rope and bucket.]
13 Jesus answered: Whoever drinks the water down in that well will get thirsty again.
14 But whoever drinks the living water *I* offer will never ever thirst again. The living water *I* give shall be a wellspring inside him that springs forth to everlasting life.
15 The woman then said: Sir, then give me this water so I never thirst again, and won't have to walk all the way out here for water!
16 Jesus answered: Go get your husband, then return.
17 To this, the woman replied: I have no husband. Jesus said back: You've answered well to say you have no husband.
18 You've had five husbands, and the man you're living with now isn't married to you, so you've spoken truthfully.
19 The woman now said: Sir, I realize you must be a prophet!
20 Now tell me--our fathers worshipped God in the temple here, at Mount Gerazim, but you Jews say Jerusalem is the place to worship God. [Which is right, or does it make a difference?]
21 Jesus said in response: Woman, believe me--the time is coming when whether you worship the Father at Mount Gerazim or Jerusalem will be irrelevant.
22 But more importantly, you Samaritans worship a God you don't really know, while we Jews know Whom we worship, for salvation comes from us.
23 But the time is coming, and now is beginning, when the true worshippers of the Father will worship Him in spirit and in truth, for those are the sorts of worshippers the Father wants. [Thus, *where* you worship God is irrelevant, for the place to worship God is in your heart.]
24 For God is a spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.
25 Then the woman then said to him: I know that the Messiah is coming--the one they call Christ--and when he does, he will tell us everything we have to do.
26 Jesus said to her: I, who speak to you, *am* the Messiah!
27 About this time, the disciples returned and were amazed to see that he was talking with a Samaritan woman, of all things. But none of them asked her, "What do you want?" or asked Jesus, "Why are you talking to her?"
28 The woman, meanwhile, actually left her rope and bucket, and ran back into town where she found the townsmen, whom she told:
29 Come see a man who told me all then things I ever did! Is this not the Messiah?!
30 So [out of curiosity] they came out of the city, and followed her back to the well where Jesus was.
31 Meantime, the disciples encouraged Jesus, saying: Rabbi, eat something.
32 But he said: I have food to eat that you don't know about.
33 Therefore, they asked one another: Did someone else bring him some food to eat?
34 Jesus said: My food is to do the will of Him who sent me, and to finish the work He gave me to do.
35 Isn't there a saying, *In four months comes the harvest*? I tell you, lift up your eyes and look upon the fields, for the harvest is ripened and ready even now!
36 [The wages of both the sower and the reaper is the harvest of souls who will gain eternal life--and both can rejoice together with the same pay.]
37 It's a true saying that, *One plants/another harvests*.
38 I sent you to reap a harvest you had no part in planting. It was others, who came before you, that did the planting, and you are now doing your part in continuing and being blessed by their past labors.
39 Now many of the Samaritans of that town placed faith in Jesus because of what the woman had told them: "Come see a man who told me all I ever did."
40 So when the Samaritans came to him, they begged him to stay in Sychar, so Jesus remained there for two days.
41 And many more placed faith in Jesus because of the teachings they heard from his own mouth,
42 And they told the woman: Now we believe, not because of what you told us, but because we have heard him ourselves, and we realize this *is* the Christ, the savior of the world!
43 After the two days, Jesus went on to Galilee.
44 Jesus himself had said, "A prophet receives no honor in his own country."
45 But when he arrived in Galilee, the people received him, having seen the things he had done at the Feast, because they had been there as well.
46 Jesus eventually returned to Cana of Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. And there was a certain nobleman from Capernaum whose son was deathly ill.
47 When he heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he found him and begged him to come back and heal his son who was at the point of death.
48 Jesus said to him: Except you people see miraculous signs and wonders, you will not believe.

49 The nobleman begged him, saying: Sir--please come back with me before my child dies!
50 Jesus replied: Go home--your son lives. So the man believed what Jesus told him, and went back home.
51 As he was on the way back, his servants met him, and announced: Your son is alive and well!
52 Then the nobleman asked what time his son began to improve, and they told him it was around [1 PM].
53 So the nobleman realized it was at the same time Jesus had told him, "Your son lives." And he and his entire household believed in Jesus.
54 This was the second miracle Jesus did when he was in Galilee, having returned from Judea.

JOHN CHAPTER 5

1 After this, Jesus returned to Jerusalem during another Passover.
2 Now at Jerusalem is a spring with five porches called in Hebrew *Bethesda* [meaning House of Mercy], which is down by the sheep market.
3 In the porches lay a great crowd of sick and infirmed people waiting for the water to be disturbed.
4 [For every so often, an angel would go down and disturb the water, and whoever stepped in first would be healed of whatever ailments he had.]
5 A certain cripple was there who had been in that state for thirty-eight years.
6 When Jesus saw him lying there, and came to understand he had been crippled for that many years, he asked: Do you want to be made whole?
7 The cripple answered: Sir, I have no one who can lift me into the spring when the water is stirred up--someone always steps in before me!
8 Jesus told him: Rise, pick up your mat, and walk!
9 And immediately the man was healed, took up his mat, and began walking home. This happened to be done on a Sabbath.
10 Some Judeans spotted him, and said: This is the Sabbath--you're violating the Law by carrying the burden of a mat!
11 But the man answered back: The man who healed me told me to pick up my mat, and walk.
12 So they demanded to know: Who told you that?!
13 But the man who had been healed couldn't show them, for Jesus had left the area due to the large crowd that had gathered.
14 Jesus later spotted him in one of the Temple courts and came up to him, saying: You are made whole
now--sin no more, lest a worse thing befall you!
15 Then the man went out, and told the Judeans that Jesus was the one who had restored his limbs to full strength.
16 Therefore, the Judeans persecuted Jesus and wanted to slay him for doing things like this on the Sabbath.
17 But Jesus told them: My Father works [--doing good on the Sabbath--] and so do I!
18 That statement made the Judeans seek to kill him all the more, for not only had Jesus broken the Sabbath, but he also called God his Father, making himself equal with God.
19 Then Jesus added: Truly, truly, I say to you: The Son can do nothing on his own--only what he sees the Father do! Thus, the things the Father does, the Son does likewise!
20 For the Father is very fond of the Son, and shows him all the things He does, and will show him even greater things--things that will amaze you.
21 For as the Father raises and gives life to the dead, even so the Son will give [eternal] life to whomever *he* chooses.
22 For the Father judges no man, but has given the right to pass judgment to the Son,
23 So that all men may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him!
24 Truly, truly, I tell you: He who hears my Message and believes on Him who sent me has everlasting life, and shall not face condemnation, but has made the transition from death to life.
25 Truly, truly, I tell you: The time is coming, and is now starting, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and the ones who hear it will live.
26 For as the Father is the source of life, so He has enabled the Son to also be a source of life,
27 And has given him the authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of Man [--the *bar Enash* Daniel prophesied of]!
28 Don't be shocked by this, for the time is coming in which all who are in the grave will hear his voice,
29 And will come out. Those who have done good will come out to enter the resurrection of life, while those who did evil will come out to the resurrection of damnation!
30 I can't do anything of my own volition. As God tells me, I judge--and my judgment is fair, because I am not seeking my own will, but the will of the Father who sent me.
31 If I testify on my own behalf [for my own glory], I am a fraud.
32 There is another who testifies on my behalf, and I know his testimony of me is true. [That person is John.]
33 You sent inquisitors to John, and he testified about the truth.
34 But the only testimony that matters to me is not from man [but from God]. Even so, I boast of John's testimony for *your* own good, that you might be saved.
35 John was a bright and shining light, and for a short time you were willing to rejoice in his light [until you realized he wouldn't dance to your tune].
36 But I have a greater testimony than John: the miracles my Father has given me to accomplish. These miracles testify that I haven't come on my own, but that the Father sent me.
37 And the Father Himself, who did send me, has testified about me. But *you* have never heard His voice, nor ever seen Him in person [as I have].
38 Nor does His Word live in your hearts, because you don't believe the one He has sent to you.
39 You constantly study the Scriptures, for you think they will lead you to eternal life, and those very Scriptures tell you about *me*.
40 Yet you will not come to me in order to *have* true life.
41 I don't say that because I seek honor from men,
42 But because I know you don't have the love of God dwelling in your hearts!
43 I have come in my Father's name, and you reject me. [Someday,] one will come in his own name, and him you'll eagerly accept.
44 How can you believe in the first place, when you crave the approval of each other instead of the approval of God alone?
45 Don't think I will be the one bringing accusations against you to the Father. The one who will do that is Moses, in whom you trust!
46 For if you had believed Moses, you would have believed me as well, because Moses wrote [and prophesied] about me.
47 But if you won't believe *his* writings, how can you believe what *I* tell you?

JOHN CHAPTER 6

1 After these events, Jesus sailed across the Sea of Galilee, which is called the Sea of Tiberius by the Romans.

2 And a great multitude of people followed him because of all the miracles they had seen him perform on the diseased.
3 Meanwhile, Jesus went up onto a mountain, and sat down there with his disciples.
4 This was when the Jewish Feast of Passover was at hand.
5 When Jesus looked up and saw what a great crowd was gathering, he asked Philip: Where will we ever buy enough bread to feed all these people?
6 But he said this to test Philip's faith, because he knew what he had in mind.
7 Philip answered: Six months' wages wouldn't buy enough bread for everyone in this mob to take one bite!
8 Now one of Jesus' other disciples, Andrew, the brother of Shimon Peter, spoke up, and said:
9 There's a boy here who has five barley loaves and a pair of small pickled fish--but what good is that among so many?
10 But Jesus said: Make the men sit down. Now it was a very grassy area so the men, who numbered five thousand, sat down as ordered.
11 Then Jesus took the barley loaves, and when he had given thanks to God, he broke them up and distributed them to the disciples who then distributed them to the people. He did that with the fish as well, giving the people as much as they wanted.
12 When everyone was full, he told the disciples: Gather up the leftovers so nothing is lost.
13 They did this, and filled twelve baskets with leftover bread from the five barley loaves they'd eaten from
14 Then, when the men in the crowd saw this miracle of Jesus, they said: Surely this is the prophet Moses said would come into the world!
15 When Jesus concluded they would try to take him by force and make him a king, he left the area and went alone to a mountain.
16 That evening, the disciples went down to the sea of Galilee,
17 And entered a boat with the intention of sailing to Capernaum. Now it became dark, and Jesus still had not returned to them,
18 And then the lake was hit by a tremendous windstorm, whipping the water into a maelstrom.
19 So when they had rowed several miles in the face of the storm, they saw Jesus walking atop the sea, making his way toward them, and they were terrified.
20 But he called out to them: It's I--don't be afraid!
21 Then they let him board, and the boat immediately arrived at its destination.
22 The next day, the crowds on other side of the lake saw only one small boat on shore after Jesus' disciples had sailed off. They knew that Jesus hadn't departed with them, but that the disciples had left by themselves.
23 Meanwhile, word of the miracle had spread to Tiberius, and boatloads of people began arriving near the place where the Lord had performed the miracle of the loaves after giving thanks.
24 When the people on shore saw that neither Jesus nor the disciples were there, they took to the boats and sailed over to Capernaum, hoping to find him.
25 When they found him there on the other side of the sea, they said: Rabbi, when did you come here?
26 Jesus answered, and said: Truly, truly, I tell you: You're not looking for me because you saw miracles [and believed in who I am]--you're only here because you ate the loaves I fed you with!
27 Don't seek for the meat that is here today, and gone tomorrow--seek for the meat leading to eternal life that the Son of Man will give you, for God the Father has ordained him to that task, and placed His seal of approval on him!
28 [Frustrated,] the crowd then asked: Well, then what must *we* do to be able to perform miracle works of God [like *you* do]?
29 Jesus responded: The foundation for that is to place faith in the one who was sent by Him.
30 They therefore replied: Then what sign do you have to show us so we can see it, and place faith *in* you? What deed will you do?
31 Our ancestors received manna to eat in the desert. The Scripture says, *He gave them bread from heaven to eat*. [Since you want us to follow you, is it not reasonable--even Scriptural--for you to do the same for us as well?]
32 Then Jesus said to them: Truly, truly, I tell you: *Moses* didn't give you that bread from heaven; but my Father gives you the *true* bread from heaven!
33 For the true bread of God is he who came down from heaven and gives life to the world.
34 Then they said to him: Lord, forever give us this bread you speak of.
35 Jesus' reply was: *I* am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall never hunger; and he who places faith in me will never thirst either!
36 But as I said, you do not believe, even though you have seen me.
37 All whom the father gives me shall find their way to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out!
38 For I came down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me.
39 And this is the will of the Father who sent me: That of all He has given me, I shall lose none, but will raise them up on the last day.
40 And this too is the will of the Father who sent me: That everyone who sees and believes on the Son may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up on the last day.
41 Then the Judeans murmured at him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven."
42 And they said: Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? Then how can he claim, 'I came down from heaven'?
43 Jesus then answered the crowd: Stop murmuring amongst yourselves.
44 No man can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him to me, and I will raise him up on the last day.
45 It is written in the scrolls of the prophets, **And they shall be all taught of God**. Thus, every man who has heard and been taught by the Father will come to me.
46 Not that any mortal man has ever seen the Father, except him who is of God--*he* has seen the Father!
47 Truly, truly, I tell you: He who believes on me has everlasting life!
48 I am the bread of life!
49 The bread you spoke of in the wilderness? Your ancestors ate that manna, and they are all dead.
50 But I am the bread that came down from heaven, which a man can eat and never die!
51 For I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If any man eats this bread, he will live forever, and the bread I give is my flesh, which I will offer up to give life to the world.
52 Hearing this, the Judeans argued amongst themselves, saying: How can this man give us his flesh to eat?
53 Then Jesus answered: Truly, truly, I tell you: Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, you will have no life in you.
54 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day!
55 For indeed, my flesh is meat, and my blood is drink.
56 He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood dwells in me and I in him.

57 As the living Father has sent me, and as I live by the Father, so he who consumes me will live by me!
58 So then, *I* am the bread that came down from heaven--not the manna your ancestors ate, all of whom are now dead! The bread I am will give eternal life to whoever eats it!
59 These things Jesus said as he taught in the synagogue in Capernaum.
60 Many of his disciples, when they heard all this, said to each other: This makes no sense. Who can understand what he means?
61 When Jesus perceived that his disciples murmured at his words, he said to them: Are *these* words a stumbling block for you?
62 What if you were to see the Son of Man ascend back to where he was before?
63 It is the Spirit that gives life, and man's efforts [to find life on his own, through efforts of his own] are pointless! The teachings I impart to you are [revelation], and they are life.
64 But there are some of you here who do not believe. For Jesus knew from the beginning who did not truly believe, and who would betray him.
65 Jesus concluded: This is why I said to you that no man can come to me unless the Father enables him to.
66 From that point, many of Jesus' disciples returned home, and no longer followed him.
67 Then Jesus said to the twelve: Will you leave as well?
68 Then Shimon Peter answered: Lord, to whom would we go? You alone have the teachings of eternal life.
69 And we are absolutely convinced, and believe, that you are the Messiah, Son of the Living God!
70 Jesus told them: Have I not chosen you twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?
71 He was referring to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, who was one of the twelve, and the one who would betray him.

JOHN CHAPTER 7

1 After these events, Jesus traveled about Galilee, but would not go into Judea because the Judeans wanted to kill him.
2 Now the Jewish Festival of *Sukkot* [Tabernacles] was at hand.
3 Jesus' kinsmen thus told him: Go back to Judea, and let your disciples there see the same miracles you're doing here.
4 No man makes a name for himself by staying hidden. If you can do all these miraculous things, don't do them in secret--do them openly, for the whole world to see!
5 For his kinsmen didn't believe in him either.
6 Jesus answered: My time is not yet come, but any time is a good time for *you*!
7 The world has no reason to hate you, but it hates me because I testify that its whole system is evil.
8 If *you* want to go to the Feast, then go! I'm not ready to go because my time isn't fully come yet.
9 After saying this, Jesus remained in Galilee for a time.
10 But after his kinsmen had gone up, he subsequently followed, but he did so in secret.
11 Now the Judeans looked for him amongst the crowd assembled for the Feast, and they wondered: Where is he?
12 And there was a great debate among the people with some saying, "He is a good man," while others said, "No, he's deceiving the people!"
13 But no one voiced their opinion loudly, because they were afraid of saying something that would offend the [Judean religious leaders].
14 Now during the middle part of the Feast, Jesus went into the Temple courts and taught the people.
15 And the Judeans marveled, saying: How did this man learn to read and teach the Scriptures, seeing as he has never been trained by any *yeshiva*?
16 Jesus answered them: This is not my doctrine--it is the doctrine of Him who sent me.
17 If any man does His will, he will know if the doctrines I teach are of myself, or of God.
18 He who preaches his own doctrine seeks his own glory. He who seeks the glory of the One who sent him is sincere and guiltless.
19 Didn't Moses give you the Torah, yet none of you keep it? Why are you plotting to kill me?
20 The crowd [of leaders] answered: You have a demon! Who here is plotting to kill you?
21 Jesus replied: I did one miracle on the Sabbath, and you all were amazed I would do such a thing on that day.
22 Now Moses gave you the laws about circumcision--though it came down from the Patriarchs first, of course--and you have no problem breaking the law of Resting by circumcising an infant on the Sabbath yourselves.
23 So if you agree it is permissible to work on the Sabbath by doing a physical operation of circumcision, why would you be angry that I had made a sick man completely whole on the Sabbath?
24 Judge not according to outward appearance, but judge righteously!
25 Then some residents of Jerusalem said: Isn't this the man they want to kill?
26 But look--he speaks boldly, in their faces, and they can't respond. Do the elders actually know he is the Messiah?
27 The strange thing is, we know where this man comes from, but won't the Messiah arrive out of nowhere?
28 Then Jesus cried out to the crowd in the Temple courtyard as he taught: You may know me and where I come from, yet I did not come on my own, but the One who sent me is true--and you don't know *Him*!
29 But *I* know Him, for I am from Him, and He sent me!
30 Then the elders sought to take him into custody, but no one could because his hour had not yet arrived.
31 And many people believed in him, saying: [If he's not the Messiah,] when the Messiah *does* come, will he do more miracles than this man?
32 When the Pharisees heard the people saying such things, they and the chief Sadducee priests assigned some Temple officers to take him.
33 Jesus said to them: I will be with you only for a little while longer, and then I will go to Him who sent me.
34 You will seek me, but not find me, for where I am you cannot come.
35 The Judeans said among themselves: Where will he go that we can't find him? Does he mean he'll go to the Jews dispersed abroad, and teach the Gentiles?
36 What kind of saying is this, 'You will seek me, but not find me,' and 'Where I am, you cannot come'?
37 In the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood forth, and shouted out: If any man is thirsty--let him come to *me*, and drink!
38 He who places faith in me, as the Scripture says, **Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water**.
39 Jesus here was referring to the Spirit of God, which those who placed faith in him would receive, for the Holy Spirit had not yet been given to man because Jesus had not been glorified yet.
40 Many of those present, when they heard him speak these words, said: This man is certainly the Prophet Moses spoke about!
41 Others said: This is the Messiah! But some wondered: Will the Messiah come out of Galilee?

42 Hasn't the Scripture prophesied that the Messiah will come from David's line, out of Bethlehem where David was from?
43 So the people were divided over him.
44 Some still wanted to take him into custody, but no man laid hands on him.
45 Then the officers ordered to apprehend Jesus returned to the chief Sadducee priests and Pharisees who had sent them. They were asked: Why haven't you brought him in?
46 They replied: No man ever spoke like this man!
47 Then the Pharisees who were present said: Are you deceived too?
48 Have any of the elders of Israel, or any of the schools of the Pharisees believed on him?
49 [Only these common people have,] who don't know the Torah, and are cursed by God!
50 Nicodemus, the one who had come to Jesus by night, replied:
51 Does our Torah judge any man before he has a chance to defend himself?
52 They answered: Are you a Galilean too? Search the Scriptures--no prophet is prophesied to come out of Galilee!
53 After this, everyone went back home.

JOHN CHAPTER 8

1 Jesus now went to the Mount of Olives.
2 Early the next morning, he returned to the Temple, the throng of people came to him, and he sat down and taught them.
3 As he was doing this, the Torah teachers and Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught committing adultery. When they made her stand forth with them,
4 They said to Jesus: Rabbi--this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery!
5 Moses, in the Torah, commanded us to stone women like her. But what do *you* say?
6 They said this to try to trick Jesus and get something to use against him. But Jesus simply stooped down, and with a finger began writing in the dust on the ground as though he hadn't heard them.
7 When they pressed the point, he stood up, and said:
Fine--let whichever of you who has never committed [the same] sin cast the first stone at her.
8 Then he bent down, and began to write again.
9 Those who heard his statement, being convicted by their consciences, now began drifting away, one by one, starting with the oldest, down to the youngest. Finally, the woman was left behind with the crowd that had assembled to hear Jesus preach.
10 When Jesus stood up and saw the woman left alone, he said: Woman, where are the ones who accused you? Has no one condemned you?
11 She said: No one, Lord. And Jesus replied: Neither do I condemn you. Go, and sin no more.
12 Then Jesus proclaimed to everyone: I am the light of the world! He who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life!
13 The Pharisees thus said to him: You're testifying about yourself, so your testimony is not true!
14 Jesus replied: Even though I testify about myself, my testimony is *still* true, because I know where I came from, and where I'm returning to. But you have no idea of where I came from or where I'm returning to.
15 You pass judgment [on me] according to fleshly logic, even though *I* judge no man.
16 But if I *did* set myself up as judge, my judgment would be accurate, because I would not be the only one doing the judging--so would the Father who sent me.
17 It's written in your own Torah that the testimony of two witnesses is acceptable proof in court.
18 I testify about who and what I am, and so does my Father, who sent me.
19 Then they asked him: Where *is* your father? Jesus answered: You don't know me *or* my Father! If you knew me, you would know my Father as well!
20 Jesus spoke these words in the Courtyard of Women as he taught at the Temple, and no one laid a hand on him, for his hour had not yet come.
21 Then Jesus added: I will go where I must, and you will seek me, but will continue on without repenting until you die and are lost--for where I am going you cannot come!
22 Then the Judean [Pharisees there] said: Will he kill himself? Is that what he means when he says, "Where I am going, you cannot come?"
23 Jesus' response was: You are from beneath, and I am from above. You are of this world, and I am *not* of this world.
24 That is why I said that you all will die in your sins, for if you do not believe I am He, you will continue in your sins until you die [and are lost]!
25 They asked: Then who are you? Jesus retorted: I am the same one I've told you I was from the beginning!
26 I have many things to say about you and to pass judgment on--but He who sent me is true, and I tell the world what I heard *Him* say.
27 They did not understand that he was speaking about the Father.
28 Then Jesus added: When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will realize I am He, and that I am doing nothing on my own, but I am only speaking what my Father has taught me.
29 And He that sent me is with me. The Father has not abandoned me, for I always do the things that please Him.
30 As Jesus spoke these words, many believed on him.
31 Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed on him: If you continue in my teachings, you are indeed my disciples.
32 And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free!
33 The [Pharisees] answered: We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can you say, 'You shall be set free'?
34 Jesus answered: Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever continually commits sin is the slave of sin [and in bondage to it and its god].
35 And the slave [to sin] does not remain in the House [--meaning the Temple--] forever. But the *Son* will abide there forever!
36 So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.
37 I know you are descended from Abraham, but you plot to kill me because my teachings cannot take root in your hearts.
38 I tell about what I have seen with *my* Father, but you do the works seen of of *your* father!
39 They answered back: Abraham is our father! But Jesus said: If you really *were* Abraham's children, you would do the things Abraham did.
40 Instead, now you seek to kill me--a man who told you the truth I heard from God for you. Abraham never acted like that!
41 No, you do the deeds of your *real* father. They snapped back: *We're* not the ones who were conceived out-of-wedlock! We have *one* father [--not two, like you--] and our father is God Himself!
42 Jesus said: If God *were* your father, you would love me, because I came out from Him to you, for I didn't come on my own--He sent me to you.
43 You wonder why you can't understand my manner of speech [about going where you cannot]? It's because you don't like, and don't accept, a word I say!

44 You are the children of your father the devil, and the things he yearns for, you will fulfill. He was a murderer from the beginning, and did not remain in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks what comes naturally to him, because he is a liar and the father of lies [and liars].
45 And so, because I tell you the *truth*, you don't believe me.
46 Which of you can convict me of committing sin? And if I tell you the truth, why don't you believe me?
47 He who is of God, hears God's words. You don't hear them because you obviously are not *of* God!
48 Then the Judeans retorted: Aren't we right to say you're nothing but a demon-possessed Samaritan?!
49 Jesus replied: *I* have no demon. I simply honor my Father in the face of your dishonoring *me*.
50 And I care nothing about my own glory. It is [God] who judges what I do, and desires to glorify me because of it.
51 Truly, truly, I say to you: If a man follows my teachings, he will never see death!
52 Then the Judeans spat back: Now we know you have a demon! Abraham and the prophets are all dead, yet you say, "If a man follows my teachings, he will never die"?!
53 Are you greater than our father Abraham or the prophets, who are dead? Just how high are you trying to elevate yourself?!
54 Jesus answered: If I'm trying to bring honor to myself, my honor is worthless. It is the Father who honors me--the One you claim is your God.
55 But you don't know Him, whereas I do. And if I were to deny that, I would be a liar like you. But I know Him, and [obey what He has said to do].
56 Your ancestor Abraham rejoiced when he glimpsed my day. *He* saw it, and was glad.
57 The Judeans retorted: You aren't fifty years old, but you've seen Abraham, have you?
58 Jesus answered: Truly, truly, I say to you: Before Abraham was even born--I AM!
59 [At hearing Jesus use the name of God in reference to Himself], they grabbed up rocks to stone him, but he vanished and walked invisibly through their midst, leaving the Temple.

JOHN CHAPTER 9

1 As Jesus was walking along, he came upon a beggar who had been blind from his birth.
2 His disciples asked him: Rabbi--who sinned, that this man was born blind? Was it himself [in a previous life, and God cursed him to be reborn blind]? Was it his parents?
3 Jesus replied: Neither. This happened so that the works of God can be displayed in him, and
4 I must perform the works of Him who sent me while it is still day. The night is coming when no man can work.
5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.
6 After he had spoken that, Jesus spat on the ground, kneaded it into mud, and placed the mud upon the man's eyes.
7 He told him: Go wash in the pool of Siloam (a word meaning *sent*). He went as he was told, washed himself in the pool, and came up seeing!
8 When he came walking home, his neighbors--and those who had seen him blind from before--were amazed, and said: Isn't that the blind man who used to sit, and beg?
9 Some said: It's he! Others said: No, he just looks like him. But he said: I am the man.
10 Therefore, they asked: How did you get your sight back?!
11 He answered: A man named Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes with it, then he told me, "Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash." I did so, and could see!
12 Then they asked: Where is he? And the man answered: I don't know.
13 So they brought him to the Pharisees.
14 It so happened that this was the Sabbath when Jesus had made the mud and opened his eyes.
15 The Pharisees repeated the question, asking how he had received his sight. The man said: He put mud on my eyes, I washed it out, and I can now see.
16 Therefore some of the [Shammaiite] Pharisees said: This man is not of God, because he violates the command to rest on the Sabbath! Others [from the school of Hillel] said: How can a sinner work miracles like this? So there was a division of opinion about Jesus.
17 They turned back to the man and asked: What do *you* think about this man, since you're the one whose eyes he opened? He answered: That he is a prophet!
18 But the Judeans became skeptical that the man had even been blind until they summoned his parents.
19 So they asked them: Is this your son, whom you say was born blind? How is it that he now sees?
20 The parents replied: This is indeed our son, and he was indeed born blind.
21 But how he can see now, we have no idea. Nor do we know who did it. He's an adult--ask *him*! He can speak for himself!
22 His parents spoke like this because they feared the Judean authorities, for they had already issued an edict that anyone who proclaimed Jesus to be the Messiah would be excommunicated from the synagogues.
23 So his parents ducked the question, and told the Pharisees: "He's an adult--ask *him*!"
24 The Pharisees again summoned the man, and told him: Give praise to *God* for this--we know this man is a sinner!
25 He answered them: I have no idea whether he is a sinner or not--I only know that where before I was blind, now I can see!
26 Then they asked again: Well, just how did he do it?! How did he heal your eyes?!
27 He answered back: I already told you, and you didn't hear it--are you deaf? Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?
28 Then they rose up, enraged at him, and said: *You* may be his disciple, but we are *Moses'* disciples!
29 We know God spoke to Moses. As for this man, we know nothing about him, or where he comes from!
30 To this, the man said: Now this is a great thing--he made me, a blind man, able to see, yet you know nothing about him, or where he's from?
31 We all know God doesn't hear the prayer of sinners, but if any man worships God and does His will--God hears *that* man's call!
32 Since the world began, it's never been said that a man made a person born blind able to see [including the greatest of prophets].
33 If this man weren't of God, he could do nothing!
34 Furious, they answered: You were born blind because of your sins to start with--and you dare teach *us*?! So they [excommunicated him, and] threw him out.
34 [*Alternate reading*]: Furious, they answered: You *mamser*--who do you think you are to teach *us*?! So they [excommunicated him, and] threw him out.
35 Jesus heard about this, and when he found the man, he asked him: Do you believe on the Son of God?
36 The man replied: Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?

37 Jesus answered: You have seen him--he is the one talking with you now!
38 And he said: Lord, I believe! Then he did obeisance to him.
39 Jesus said: I have come so that judgment would come to this world, so the blind would be made to see, and so those who see would become blind.
40 Some of the Pharisees who were with him and heard this asked: Are we also blind in your opinion?
41 Jesus said in response: If you *were* truly blind, you would have no sin. But you insist you are not, saying, "We can see just fine." Therefore, [you cannot repent, and] your sin remains upon you.

JOHN CHAPTER 10

1 Truly, truly, I tell you: A man who comes into the sheep pen by some way other than through the gate is obviously a thief and robber.
2 But he who comes in through the gate is obviously the shepherd of the sheep.
3 To him, the Gatekeeper opens the gate up, and the sheep hear his voice calling them each by name, and so he leads them out.
4 And after he brings his sheep out, he walks before them and the sheep follow him because they know his voice.
5 They won't follow a stranger, but will run from him because they don't recognize the voice of strangers.
6 Jesus spoke this parable to them, but they didn't understand the meaning of what he spoke.
7 So he said again: Truly, truly, I tell you: I am the Gate to the sheep.
8 All who ever came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep didn't listen to them.
9 I am the Gate. If any man comes in through me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.
10 The thief only comes to steal, kill, and destroy. But I have come so that all might find supernatural fullness of life, and have it in abundance.
11 I am the good shepherd, and a good shepherd will sacrifice his life to save his sheep.
12 But a hired hand, who doesn't consider the sheep his own, will run at the first sight of a wolf, leaving the sheep to fend for themselves--and the wolf will ravage the whole flock.
13 The hired hand runs because he doesn't work unless he is paid to, and he cares nothing for the sheep he has charge over.
14 I am the good shepherd, and I know my sheep, and they know me,
15 As the Father knows me, I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.
16 And there are other sheep I have that are not of this flock. I must gather them into the flock as well, and they will respond to my voice, and come. Then there will be one flock with one shepherd.
17 Thus, because I willingly lay down my life [for my sheep], that I might take it up again, my Father loves me.
18 No man takes my life from me; I freely lay it down. I have the power both to lay it down, and to pick it up again. This permission I received from my Father.
19 These words caused a new split amongst the Judean leaders over Jesus.
20 Many said: He's demon-possessed, and insane! Why do you listen to him?
21 Others said: These don't sound like the words of a demon-possessed man. Can a demon make a blind man see?
22 Now it was winter at Jerusalem during the Feast of *Hanukkah*,
23 And Jesus happened to be walking in Solomon's porch in the Temple complex.
24 Then a group of Judean leaders encircled him, and demanded to know: How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, say it plainly!
25 Jesus answered: I already told you what I was, but you didn't believe it. The miracles I do in my Father's name *prove* who and what I am!
26 But as I told you, you don't believe it because you're not my sheep.
27 *My* sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.
28 And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man take them from my hand.
29 My Father, who gave them to me, is greater than anyone or anything, and no one is able to take them out of my *Father's* hand.
30 Thus, I and my Father are one!
31 The Judeans, upon hearing this, again reached for rocks to stone Jesus.
32 But Jesus replied: Many good deeds have I shown you from my Father. For which of them are you stoning me?
33 The Judeans answered: We're stoning you for blasphemy, not for doing good deeds! You, being a mere man, have the gall to equate yourself with God!
34 Jesus answered back: Doesn't your own Torah say: **I said, Ye are gods**?
35 If God called mortal men "**gods**" to whom the Word of God came, and since the Scripture cannot fail,
36 Why do you say to the one God sanctified and sent to the earth, 'You're blaspheming,' because I affirm that I am the Son of God?
37 If I don't do the deeds my Father does, then don't believe me.
38 But if I *do*, even if you won't believe *me*, then believe what you see, and accept that the Father is in me and I in Him.
39 Therefore, the crowd sought to drag him off to be stoned, but he escaped from their hands,
40 And departed the city to the place at the far side of the Jordan where John first baptized. There he encamped [with the disciples].
41 Many people came to him there, and said: John did no miraculous deeds, but everything he said about this man is true!
42 And many people put their faith in him at that place.

JOHN CHAPTER 11

1 Now a certain man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the town where he and his two sisters, Mary and Martha, lived.
2 [It was Mary, the sister of this same sick man Lazarus, who anointed Jesus with ointment, and dried his feet with her hair.]
3 Therefore, his sisters sent word to Jesus, saying:
Lord--the man you love is sick!
4 When Jesus heard that, he said: This sickness is not for death, but to glorify God, that the Son may be glorified by it.
5 Now Jesus loved Martha, her sister, and Lazarus.
6 But when Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick, he remained where he was for two more days.
7 After that, he told the disciples: Let's return to Judea.
8 The disciples said in response: Master--the Judeans just tried to *stone* you, and you're going back?!
9 Jesus replied: Aren't there twelve hours of daylight during which a man can walk without stumbling because he can see in the light?
10 But if a man walks in the night, he will stumble because no light is in him.
11 He added after saying that: Our friend Lazarus is sleeping, and I must go to awaken him from that sleep.
12 But the disciples said: Lord, if he's resting we don't *need* to go, for he will be fine.

13 But Jesus was talking about Lazarus' death, and the disciples misunderstood him to be talking of resting in normal sleep.
14 Finally, Jesus said plainly: Lazarus is dead.
15 And I rejoice for your sakes I was not there [to heal him], because your faith will now be strengthened. Let us go to him.
16 Then said Thomas, called Didymus ["the twin"], to the other disciples: We may as well go too--and die with him.
17 When Jesus arrived a couple of days later, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days.
18 Now Bethany is only a couple of miles from Jerusalem.
19 And many Jews from there visited Martha and Mary to comfort them at their brother's loss.
20 Then Martha, when she heard that Jesus was approaching, went out to meet him, but Mary remained sitting *shiva* in the house, and did not stir.
21 When she met him, Martha said to Jesus: Lord--if you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died!
22 But I know that even now, God will do whatever you ask Him to.
23 Jesus told her: Your brother will rise again.
24 Martha said in response: I know he will rise in the resurrection on the last day.
25 Jesus proclaimed: *I* am the resurrection, and the life! He who places faith in me, though he is dead, yet shall he live!
26 And whoever lives, and places faith in me, shall never die. Do you believe this?
27 Martha said: Yes, Lord--I have faith that you are the Messiah, the Son of God who was to come into the world!
28 After she said this, she went her way and secretly called her sister Mary, saying: *The Master is here, and is calling for you*.
29 As soon as Mary heard that, she hastily rose up and came to where Jesus was.
30 Now Jesus wasn't in town yet, but outside it [near the graveyard] where Martha had met him.
31 When the Jews who had been in the house with her saw Mary hurry out, they followed her, saying: She must be going to the grave to weep there.
32 When Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and cried out: Lord--if you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died!
33 When Jesus saw that both she and the Judeans who came with her were weeping, he groaned in his spirit, and was troubled.
34 He asked: Where have you laid him? They said: Lord, come see!
35 Jesus began to sob.
36 [When they saw this,] the Judeans said: See how he loved him?
37 But some said: Couldn't he, who made that blind fellow see, have saved *this* man from dying?
38 Jesus, groaning in himself [at these statements], came to the tomb, which was inside a cave over whose mouth a large stone had been placed.
39 Jesus said: Some of you go remove the stone. Martha, the sister of the dead man, replied: Lord, by now he smells terrible--it's been four days since he died and was interred!
40 Jesus said in response: Did I not say that if you will have faith, you will see the glory of God?
41 So they rolled the stone away from the tomb where the dead Lazarus lay. Then Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said: Father, I thank You that You have heard me.
42 And I know You always hear me, but because of the people standing here, I said that to help them have faith that You sent me.
43 After saying this, Jesus shouted: Lazarus, come out!
44 And the dead man did come out, wrapped up in linen like a mummy, with even his face wrapped in a swath of cloth. Jesus said: Get him free of those wrappings.
45 Then many of the Judeans who had come to Mary and seen the spectacular things he did placed faith in Jesus.
46 But others went to tell the Pharisees what Jesus had done.
47 Then the chief Sadducee priests and some of the key Pharisees formed a sanhedrin, and debated: What shall we do about this man, for he does many miracles?
48 If we don't stop him, all the people will believe on him, and the Romans will come and destroy our Temple and nation.
49 And one of them named Caiaphas, who was High Priest that year, said to them: You know nothing at all!
50 Nor have you enough brains to realize it is better for us that one man die for the people so that Israel itself does not die!
51 His words did not come from his own mind, but being High Priest that year, he spoke a prophecy [from God, who honored his position,] that Jesus should die for the nation.
52 And not only for Israel, but that he also would gather together, in one, all the children of God who were scattered upon the earth [--both Jew *and* Gentile].
53 From that point on, they all plotted how to put Jesus to death.
54 Jesus thus no longer walked openly among the Judeans, but retreated into the desert countryside to the city of Ephraim, where he remained with the disciples.
55 Then came the Jewish Passover, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem beforehand in order to ritually purify themselves.
56 These people looked for Jesus, and debated amongst themselves as they stood around at the Temple: What do you think? Won't he come for the Festival?
57 Meanwhile, both the chief Sadducee priests and the Pharisees had issued a joint edict that if anyone knew where Jesus was, they should inform them so they could take him into custody.

JOHN CHAPTER 12

1 In the six days before Passover, Jesus went to Bethany where Lazarus, the man he had raised from the dead, was.
2 They prepared dinner for him there, Martha doing the serving, while Lazarus reclined at the table with him.
3 Mary took a pound of expensive spikenard ointment and anointed Jesus' feet with it. Then she dried them with her long hair, and the whole house smelled from the scent of the ointment.
4 Seeing this, Simon's son, Judas Iscariot--who would betray him--grumbled:
5 This ointment could be sold for nearly a year's wages! Why not do so, and give it to the poor?
6 He said this not because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief--for he was the group's treasurer, and would embezzle money from the community purse.
7 Jesus answered: Let her alone. She has done this to prepare for the day of my burial.
8 You will always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me with you.
9 Many of the Judeans, by the way, knew Jesus was there and so they came not just to see him, but also Lazarus whom he had resurrected from the dead.
10 Then the chief priests of the Temple plotted to kill Lazarus as well,
11 Because the miracle involving him caused many of the Judeans to leave, rejecting them and placing faith in Jesus.
12 The next day, when they heard Jesus was on his way to the Festival, many people who were coming to Jerusalem,
13 Took palm fronds and went out to meet him, crying: Save now! Blessed is the King of Israel who comes in the name of the Lord!

14 And Jesus, when he had found a young donkey, sat upon it, fulfilling a prophecy:
15 **Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt**.
16 When such things were happening, the disciples did not understand their implications. But after Jesus was glorified, they remembered all these various prophecies, and things like this that done to fulfill them.
17 Meanwhile, the people who were there when Jesus called Lazarus forth from the grave, and raised him up from the dead, were spreading word of the miracle.
18 Because of this, others flocked to Jesus after hearing word of this miracle he had done.
19 When the Pharisees saw this, they said amongst themselves: See? You can't stop him. Look--the whole world has gone after him!
20 Now there were certain Greek proselytes to Judaism who had also come to Jerusalem to participate in the Feast.
21 They came to Philip, who was from the town of Bethsaida [--meaning *House of the Hunt*--] in Galilee, and told him: Sir, we would like to speak to Jesus.
22 Philip passed word to Andrew, and Andrew and Philip both went, and told Jesus.
23 And Jesus answered: [Now even the Gentiles are coming!] The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.
24 Truly, truly, I say to you: Except a kernel of wheat be buried in the ground and die, it will remain a single seed. But if it dies, it will provide a great harvest of grain.
25 The person who loves his life shall lose it, but he who hates his earthly life shall keep it into eternity and eternal life.
26 If any man will serve me, let him follow me, and where I am my servant shall be also. And if any man serves me my Father will honor him.
27 Now my soul is distressed [at what lies ahead]. But what shall I say: "Father, save me from this hour"?
No--it was for this approaching hour that I came.
28 Father, glorify Your name. Then a voice thundered from heaven that said: I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again!
29 Some of the people [with hard hearts] who were there said: That was only thunder. But others: An angel spoke to him.
30 But Jesus said: This voice was for your sake, not mine.
31 Now this world shall be judged. Now the prince of this world will be cast out.
32 And I, if I be lifted up above the earth, will draw all men to me.
33 He said this to signify the sort of death he would die.
34 But the people now said: We've heard that the Torah says that the Messiah will live forever. How is it you say, "The Son of Man must be lifted up"? Who is this "Son of Man"?
35 Jesus responded: For only a little while longer will the light be with you. Walk while you have the light, lest the darkness overtake you, for he who walks in darkness doesn't know where he is going.
36 While you have the light with you, place faith in the light, that you may be the children of enlightenment. Jesus spoke these things and then left, disappearing into the crowd, and vanishing from everyone's view.
37 But despite the many miracles that he had done before their eyes, the people did not believe on him,
38 That the words of Isaiah would be fulfilled: **Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?**
39 Therefore, they could not believe because Isaiah also said,
40 **He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them**.
41 Isaiah said these things when he foresaw and spoke of Jesus' glory.
42 Nevertheless, many--including some of the chief rulers of the people--did believe [in what he claimed to be], but they did not say so because they feared the Pharisees would excommunicate them from the synagogues.
43 For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.
44 Jesus shouted out: He who believes on me, believes not on me, but on Him who sent me!
45 And he who sees me sees Him who sent me!
46 I have come as a light to the world so that whoever believes on me will not remain [trapped] in darkness.
47 And if any man hears my words and does not believe them, I do not judge him, for I came not to judge [and condemn] the world, but to save it!
48 He who rejects me and my words has this as his judge--the very words he has rejected! Every word I spoke that he rejected will come back to condemn him at the Last Judgment!
49 For I have not spoken at my own whim. The Father who sent me commanded me what to tell you.
50 And I know that to do what He says is to receive life everlasting, so what He has said to me, I pass on to you!

JOHN CHAPTER 13

1 Now just before the day of the Passover sacrifice, Jesus--knowing his time to depart the world and return to the Father was at hand--having loved his own, loved them to the end.
2 After the dinner was over, Satan having inspired the heart of Judas Iscariot--Simon's son--to betray him,
3 Jesus, who knew that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God, and would now return to God,
4 Rose from the table, removed his robes, and donned a towel around his waist [--the garb of a slave].
5 He poured some water into a basin and began washing the disciples' feet. Then he dried them with the towel he was dressed with.
6 When he came to Shimon Peter, Peter tried to stop him, saying: Lord--you're [lowering yourself] to wash my feet?!
7 Jesus answered back: You can't understand what I'm doing right now, but eventually you will.
8 But Peter said: You will never wash my feet! Jesus said in response: If I don't wash you, then you have no part with me.
9 Shimon Peter then said: [Give me a whole bath then!]
10 Jesus replied: He who has had a bath needs only to have the dust of the earth that clings to his feet washed away, because he is fully cleansed. You are already clean, most of you--but not all.
11 Jesus said this because he knew who would betray him, so that's why he said, "You are already clean, most of you--but not all."
12 So after Jesus had washed their feet and donned his normal clothes again, he reclined at the table, and asked: Do you understand what I just did to you?
13 You call me "Master" and "Lord," and you're right to do that, because I am.
14 If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet like a slave, how much more should *you* be ready to serve each other even in the most menial way?
15 I did this an example that you should have the same attitude toward each other as I just displayed to you.
16 Truly, truly, I say to you: The slave is not above his master, neither is the one sent [with a message] greater than the one who *commissioned* him to give that message.

17 If you understand and put into practice these concepts I've taught you, you will indeed be happy!
18 I'm not talking to all of you--I know the ones I have chosen. But so that the Scripture can be fulfilled, it's true that: **He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me**.
19 I'm telling you that now so that when things are set in motion, you will believe that I am He.
20 Truly, truly, I say to you: He who receives whomever I send forth receives me. And he who receives me, receives Him who sent me.
21 After speaking this, Jesus was greatly saddened in spirit, and said: Truly, truly, I say to you--one of you will betray me.
22 Then the disciples looked back and forth at each other, wondering who it might be.
23 Now leaning close to Jesus, on his right side, was John, the disciple whom Jesus loved.
24 Shimon Peter gestured to catch his attention, and mouthed the words: "Ask him who."
25 John then whispered to Jesus: Lord, who is it?
26 Jesus whispered back: The one to whom I will hand the unleavened bread after dipping it. Then, when Jesus had dipped the unleavened bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.
27 After receiving the unleavened bread, Satan entered into Judas, and Jesus told him: What you have to do, do quickly!
28 No one at the table knew what Jesus meant by this.
29 Some thought that because Judas was the treasurer, Jesus was saying, "Buy something for the Passover," or that he should give a donation to the poor.
30 So Judas, having received the portion of bread, immediately went out. And it was night.
31 After Judas left, Jesus announced: Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God glorified in him.
32 And if God is glorified by the Son, the Son will, in turn, be glorified in God and will immediately receive God's glory in himself.
33 Little children, for only a short time more will I be with you. You will seek me, but as I told the Judeans, Where I go, you cannot come, and I say the same to you.
34 Now I give you this new commandment: Love each other as I have loved you--exactly as I have loved you!
35 This is how all men will know that you are disciples of mine: Your [unselfish] love for each other.
36 Shimon Peter asked: Lord, where are you going? Jesus replied: Where I am going, you cannot go now; but you will follow me there in time.
37 Peter responded: Lord--why can't I follow you right now? I will lay my life down for you if need be!
38 Jesus answered: Will you really lay down your life for me, Peter? Truly, truly, I say to you: The "rooster" will not cry out before you deny even knowing me, not once, but three times!

JOHN CHAPTER 14

1 Don't let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God. Have faith in me as well.
2 In my Father's mansion are many rooms. If that were not the case, I would have told you. I am going to prepare places for each of you.
3 And since I am going to prepare a place for each of you, I will return and receive you to myself, so where I am you will also be.
4 The place I am going, you already know. You also know the way to go there.
5 Thomas said to this: Lord, we *don't* know where you're going, so how *can* we know the way?
6 Jesus proclaimed: *I* am the way, the truth, and the life! No man shall come to the Father except through me!
7 If you had known me, you would have known my Father as well. And from this point on, you know Him and have seen Him.
8 Philip now spoke up, saying: Lord--then *show* us the Father, and that will satisfy us.
9 Jesus replied: Have I been with you so long that [even now] you don't know me, Philip? He who has seen me has *seen* the Father! So how is it that you say, "Show us the Father"?
10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and He is in me? The words I speak to you come from Him, not
me--and the Father who dwells in me is the one doing the mighty deeds you've seen me do!
11 Believe me when I say that I am in the Father, and He is in me. And if my word isn't good enough, then believe because of the miracles you've seen with your very own eyes.
12 Truly, truly, I say to you: He who places faith in me, the same miracles I do, he will do--and even greater than these will he do because I am going to my Father!
13 And whatever you ask in my name, I will do it so the Father will be glorified in the Son.
14 I repeat: If you ask anything in my name, I will do it!
15 And if you love *me*, do what I have commanded you to do.
16 And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper who will be with you forever.
17 He is the Spirit of truth, whom the world at large cannot receive because it doesn't see Him, neither does it know Him. But you know Him, for He accompanies you, and shall be in you!
18 I won't leave you helpless! I will come to you [through the Spirit I send].
19 In a short time, the world will see me no more, but you will see me. And because *I* will live, you will live also.
20 At that day, you will absolutely know that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.
21 He who knows and keeps my commands is he who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father as well, and I will love that person and reveal myself to him.
22 Jude said to him: Lord, how is it that you will show yourself to us, but not to the world as a whole?
23 Jesus answered: If a man loves me, he will [walk in my teachings,] and my Father will love Him--and both of us will come to him and make our home with him [through the Spirit I will send].
24 He who doesn't love me doesn't [walk in my teachings], and those teachings are not mine but those of the Father who sent me.
25 These things I have spoken while I was still with you.
26 But the Helper, whom the Father will send in my name--the Holy Spirit--shall teach you everything you need to know, and He will bring to your memory all the words I have spoken to you.
27 Peace I bequeath to you--true peace, not the sort of peace mankind offers! So don't let your hearts be troubled, nor let fear rule them!
28 You have heard me say, "I am going away"; and, "'I will return to you". If you loved me, you would rejoice at the fact I said "I am going to the Father," for My Father is greater than I.
29 And I have told you this now, before things come to a head, so that when these things happen you will believe [and not stumble].
30 I can only talk with you for a short while longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no power over me,
31 But so that the world may know that I love the Father, I obey what He has commanded me to do. Arise, and let us go from this place.

JOHN CHAPTER 15

1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.

2 Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, he cuts off and casts away. Every branch that bears fruit, he prunes so that it bears more fruit.
3 You are all clean from the Message I preached to you [that you have believed and followed].
4 Abide in me, and I will abide in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit on its own without being a part of the vine, you cannot bear fruit unless you abide in me.
5 Again--I am the vine, and you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, brings forth much fruit, for outside of me you can do nothing.
6 If a man does not abide in me, he is cast out like a dried-up branch that men gather into bundles and throw into the fire to burn up.
7 If you abide in me, and my [teachings] abide in you, you shall ask what you want and it will be granted to you.
8 This is how my Father is glorified--that you be my disciples, and bear much fruit.
9 As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Remain in my love.
10 If you do what I have ordered you to do, you will remain in my love, just as I did what my Father ordered *me* to do, and thus abide in *His* love.
11 These things I have told you so that my joy will remain in you, and your own joy may be full.
12 This is my command to you: Love each other with the same love I have loved you with.
13 There is no greater love a man can have, than that he sacrifice his own life to save the lives of his friends.
14 You are my friends if you do what I command you to do.
15 From now on, I no longer consider you to be servants. Servants don't know what their master is doing--but friends do, and now I call you *friends*. Everything my Father has told *me*, I have told *you*.
16 You have not chosen me--I chose you, and ordained you so you could go and bear fruit that will last forever, so that if you ask anything as my representatives you may receive it from my Father.
17 This is my command--that you love one another.
18 If the world hates you, know that it hated me before it hated you.
19 If you were a part of this [lost] world, it would love you, because it loves its own. But because you are not of this world, but have been chosen by me to come out of it, the world hates you.
20 Remember what I said in teaching: *The servant is not greater than his Lord.* If they have persecuted me, they will persecute you. If they used my own words against me, they will use yours against you.
21 But they will do all these things to you because of who and what I am, since they do not know Him who sent me.
22 If I had not come and corrected them, they would not be guilty of having sinned. But now they have no way to claim ignorance regarding their sin.
23 He who hates me hates my Father!
24 If I had not done the miracles among them that no man has ever done, they would not be counted guilty of sin. But they saw and hated both me and my Father.
25 But this came about so that a prophecy in their Scriptures could be fulfilled: **They hated me without a cause**.
26 But when the Helper comes, whom I will send from the Father--the Spirit of truth who comes forth from Him--He will testify about me.
27 And you also will tell others about me, because you have been with me from the beginning.

JOHN CHAPTER 16

1 I have told you these things so you do not [stumble in your faith]:
2 They shall excommunicate you from the synagogues. The time will even come when those who kill you will think they are acting as agents of God and performing a religious act and obligation to Him.
3 But they will all be doing these things because they have never known the Father *or* me.
4 But I've told you these things so that when they happen, you'll remember I warned you about them. I did not tell you about them earlier because I was still with you.
5 But now I am going back to Him who sent me, and none of you is asking, "Where are you going?"
6 Yet because I have spoken these things, your hearts have been filled with sorrow.
7 Nevertheless, I tell you truthfully that it is good for me to leave you, because if I do not, the Helper will not come to you. But if I leave you, I will send Him to you.
8 And when He is come, He will confront the world about sin; about righteousness; and the coming judgment.
9 Of sin: Because they do not believe on me.
10 Of righteousness: Because I will return to the Father, and you will see me no more.
11 Of Judgment: Because the prince of this world [--its god--] has been judged.
12 I have many more things to tell you, but you cannot understand them yet.
13 But after the Spirit of truth has come, He will guide you into all truth, for He will not speak on His own accord, but He will speak the things He hears to you. He will also show you things to come.
14 [He shall glorify me by revealing greater truths I tell Him to reveal that you cannot even fathom yet.]
15 Everything the Father has is mine, therefore I said that He will take what is mine and reveal it to you.
16 A little while, and you will not see me. But in a little while, you *will* see me because I go to the Father.
17 Then some of the disciples said amongst themselves: What does he mean, "A little while, and you will not see me. But in a little while, you *will* see me because I go to the Father"?
18 What's this, "A little while" talk? We don't understand.
19 Jesus knew they were confused and wanted to ask him what he meant, so he said: Are you all trying to figure out what I meant by saying "A little while, and you will not see me. But in a little while, you *will* see me"?
20 Truly, Truly I say to you: You will cry and mourn while the world rejoices. You will be filled with sorrow, but that sorrow will be turned into joy!
21 A woman in labor is in great sorrow at the pain, but as soon as she delivers her baby, she forgets the pain because of the joy she feels at bringing a son into the world.
22 Right now, you sorrow. But I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice--and that joy no man will ever take from you!
23 In that day, you will have no more questions for me, and truly, truly I say to you: Whatever you thereafter ask the Father as my representatives He will give to you.
24 Up to now, you have asked nothing on the basis of being my representatives. Ask now, on that basis, and you will receive so your joy will be full.
25 I've been saying all these things in the proverbs I've been telling [but you haven't understood]. The time is coming when I will no longer speak in proverbs, but will speak plainly about the Father.
26 In that day, you will make requests as my ambassadors, and I won't need to ask the Father *for* you,
27 Because the Father Himself loves you because of your love for *me*, and for your belief that I came from Him.

28 I came forth from the Father into this world, and now I leave the world to go back to the Father.
29 His disciples now said: Finally, you speak plainly, without these confusing proverbs!
30 Now we're sure you know and are revealing all things to us without needing to be asked. By this, we believe you came forth from God!
31 Jesus answered: Do you really believe now?
32 Behold, the hour comes that you will be scattered, each one running for his life, and shall abandon me. But I will not be alone, for the Father is with me.
33 These things I have spoken to you so that in me you will have peace. In this life, in this world, you will have troubles. But be of good cheer--*I* have overcome the world [and *you* will overcome it through me].

JOHN CHAPTER 17

1 Jesus spoke these things, then lifted his eyes up to heaven, saying: Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son so he can glorify You,
2 So that, as You have given him authority over every living thing, he will bestow eternal life to as many as You have given him.
3 And this is eternal life: That they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.
4 I have glorified You on earth by completing the work You gave me to do.
5 And now, O Father, glorify me with Your own glory, the same glory I had with You before time began.
6 I have displayed exactly what You are to these men--out of all the men in the world--that You gave to me. They were Your men, and You gave them to me. They have kept Your decrees.
7 [Now they know that everything I am, everything I do, and everything I say comes from You.]
8 I have given them the teachings You taught *me*, and they received them, being firmly persuaded that I came out from You, and that You sent me.
9 Now I pray for them. But I pray not for all the world, but only for those You have given me, for the ones You gave me are Yours,
10 And all of mine are Yours, and all of Yours are mine--and I am glorified in them [because of what they have done, and will do, on my behalf].
11 And now, I will no longer be present in this world, but these will be; and I come to You, Holy Father, asking You to keep and care for them through Who and What You are. Let them be in perfect unity just as You and I are.
12 While I was in the world, I kept them for You. Those You gave me I have kept safe, and not one has been lost but for Judas--the son of Perdition--so that the Scripture might be fulfilled.
13 And now I come to You, and say these things while I am still in the world, that they may be partakers of my own joy in themselves.
14 I have given them Your Message, and the world hated them because they were not a part of the world any more than *I* was a part of the world.
15 I do not ask that You would take them out of the world; I ask that You would keep watch over, and protect them, from the Evil One.
16 They are not of the world as I am not of the world.
17 Now set them apart by Your truth, for Your Message is truth.
18 As You sent me into the world, even so *I* send them out into the world.
19 And for their sakes I devote myself wholly to You, that they might also be devoted wholly to You through the truth.
20 I also do not pray for them alone, but also for the ones who will come to believe through their testimony,
21 So that [throughout all ages] my followers may be one just as You, Father, are in me and I in You. Let them all be one in us so the world may believe that You sent me.
22 And the glory You gave me, I have given to them, so that they may be one as You and I are:
23 I in them, You in me, that they may be made complete and perfectly united, so the world will know that You have sent me and have loved them no less than You have loved me.
24 Father, I also desire and decree that those whom You have given me shall come to be with me, where I am, that they may behold my glory that You gave me, for You loved me before time began.
25 O righteous Father, the world has not known You--but I have known You, and these whom You gave me have known that You sent me.
26 And I have declared who and what You are, and will continue to do so, that the love You have for me may be in them, and I be in them as well.

JOHN CHAPTER 18

1 After Jesus had spoken these things, he and the disciples crossed the Kidron brook to a garden that he and the disciples entered.
2 Judas, who betrayed him, knew about the place as well, for Jesus and the disciples often retreated there.
3 So Judas, having been given a band of men and officials from the chief Sadducee priests and the Pharisees, advanced upon the place with lanterns, torches, and weapons.
4 Jesus, knowing what lay ahead for him, stepped up and asked: Who are you looking for?
5 They answered: Jesus of Nazareth! So Jesus said in return to them: I AM! And Judas, who betrayed him, stood with the crowd.
6 When the words "I AM" left his mouth, the crowd fell back prostrate to the ground.
7 Jesus then repeated: Who are you looking for? And again they said: Jesus of Nazareth.
8 Jesus replied: I told you that I am, so if I'm whom you're looking for, let these others go their way.
9 He said this to fulfill the prophecy he made at the Passover seder: *Those You gave me I have kept safe, and not one has been lost*.
10 Then Shimon Peter, who had brought along a sword, drew it and attacked Malchus, a servant of the High Priest, cutting off his right ear.
11 But Jesus stopped him, saying: Sheath your sword! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?
12 Then the band of people led by their captain and the officers of the Judeans, bound Jesus,
13 And led him first to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was High Priest that year. [Then Annas sent him to Caiaphas' palace.]
14 Now this same Caiaphas was the one who said to the Judeans, "It is better for one man to die for the people, that Israel itself does not die."
15 Meanwhile, Shimon Peter followed along from a distance, and so did John. Now John happened to be acquainted with Caiaphas, and so he slipped into his palace.
16 But Peter halted at the gate, and John, who knew Caiaphas, went back and spoke to the girl who was the gatekeeper. Then Peter was allowed in as well.
17 As Peter stepped in, the girl in charge of the gate asked: Aren't you also one of this man's disciples? But Peter said: I am not.
18 Inside the courtyard, the servants and officers of the Temple had made a bonfire of coals, for it was cold, and Peter mingled among them, warming himself.

19 The High Priest, Caiaphas, then questioned Jesus about who his disciples were, and what his doctrine was.
20 Jesus replied to him: I spoke openly to everyone. I was always in the synagogue and the Temple where the Jews spend their time, and I have said nothing in secret.
21 Why then do you ask me what I taught? Ask the ones who heard me. They know what I said.
22 When he had spoken this, one of the officers standing by slapped Jesus across the face, saying: Is this how you talk to the High Priest?!
23 Jesus replied: If I have said something insulting against him personally, point out the slander. If I have not insulted him personally, then why do you strike me?
24 Now this was taking place after Annas had bound Jesus and sent him to Caiaphas, the current High Priest.
25 As this was going on, Shimon Peter was standing at the fire, trying to keep warm. Some of those gathered there asked him: Aren't you also one of his disciples? But he denied it, saying: I am not!
26 One of the High Priest's servants, who was related to the man whose ear Peter had cut off, said to him: Didn't I see you in the garden with him?
27 Peter denied it again, and it was then that the "rooster" cried out.
28 Then they took Jesus from Caiaphas to the Roman Hall of Judgment, even though it was early in the morning. But they did not go in themselves, lest they violate the oral Law and become ritually defiled, making them unable to eat the Passover lamb later that day.
29 So Pilate went out to them and asked: What accusations are you bringing against this man?
30 They answered: Take our word for it--if this man weren't a criminal, we wouldn't have brought him to you!
31 Pilate answered: Then you take him and judge him by your *own* law! The Judeans replied: The Law does not allow us to pass a death sentence [for only the Great Sanhedrin can do that].
32 This fulfilled what Jesus had said about the sort of death he would die [--that they would 'lift up' the Son of Man].
33 Then Pilate went back into the Judgment Hall and called Jesus to him, asking: Are you the King of the Jews?
34 Jesus replied: Are you asking that yourself, or did others *accuse* me of calling myself that?
35 Pilate answered: Am I a Judean? [I have no idea what this is all about!] Your own countrymen and chief priests brought you here. What have you done to so trouble them?
36 Jesus answered: My kingdom is not of this world. If it were of this world, my followers would have taken up arms and fought to keep me from being taken by the Judeans. But my kingdom is elsewhere.
37 Pilate's response to this was: So you *are* a king? Jesus replied: You are saying that I am a king [by what you are doing]. To this end I was born and came into the world, to bear witness of the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth hears my voice.
38 Pilate responded: [Truth?!] What *is* truth? Then he went out to the Judeans, and told them: I find no guilt in this man at all.
39 But you have a custom at the Passover [and other Festivals] that I grant clemency to a criminal. Do you wish me to release the "King of the Jews"?
40 Then they cried out: Not this man--give us bar Abbas! Now this bar Abbas was a robber [and revolutionary].

JOHN CHAPTER 19

1 Then Pilate had Jesus flogged,
2 And the soldiers made a crown of thorns that they placed upon his head. Then they put a purple robe upon him,
3 And said: Hail, King of the Jews! And they slapped him with their hands.
4 After this, Pilate went out to the crowd again, and said: I am bringing him out now, and I want you to know I find him innocent of any wrongdoing.
5 Then Jesus came out, the crown of thorns upon his head and dressed in the purple robe. Pilate said: Look at the man now! [Is this punishment enough to satisfy you?]
6 When the chief priests and their officers saw him, they cried out: Crucify him! Crucify him! To this, Pilate responded: *You* crucify him! I find no guilt in him.
7 The Judeans answered back: We have laws in our religion, and by our Torah he should die, because he appointed himself to be the "Son of God" [--the supposed Messiah, and king of Israel]!
8 Now when Pilate heard this, he was all the more afraid.
9 So he went out once more to the Judgment Hall and asked Jesus: Where did you come from? But Jesus was silent.
10 Pilate added: You have nothing to say to me? Don't you know that, at my word, you can be crucified, or set free?
11 Jesus answered: You could have no authority at all unless it came from Above. Thus, the one who handed me over to you has the greater sin.
12 From this point on, Pilate tried to find a way to release him, but the Judeans shouted out: If you free this man, you are not Caesar's friend! Anyone who makes himself a king challenges Caesar's authority!
13 When Pilate heard that comment, he finally gave in and brought Jesus forth. Then he sat upon the judgment seat in a place called *the Pavement*, which in Aramaic is called *Gabbatha*.
14 And it was [close to 9 AM] on the preparation day of Passover. Pilate then said: Behold your "King."
15 But they began to shout: Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him! Pilate replied: Shall I crucify your "King"? Then the chief priests replied: We have no king but Tiberius Caesar!
16 Then Pilate gave up, and handed Jesus over to be crucified. So the soldiers led him off.
17 And he went, carrying his cross to a place outside the city called *the Place of the Skull*, which in Aramaic is *Golgotha*.
18 There, they crucified him along with two others, one on either side of him.
19 And Pilate hung a sign atop the cross that read: JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.
20 The sign was in Aramaic as well as Greek and Latin, and many people read it, for the crucifixion site was close to the city [outside the east gate, where the red heifer was also sacrificed].
21 Then the chief priests of the Jews told Pilate: Don't write, *The King of the Jews*! Say instead that he *claimed to be King of the Jews*!
22 But Pilate replied: What I have written, I have written.
23 Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, divided up his four pieces of clothing, one for each legionnaire present. They also took his coat, which was of fine quality, being seamlessly knitted together,
24 And said: Let's not tear it apart, but dice for it. This fulfilled a prophecy in the Psalms that said: **They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots**. Thus, the soldiers found themselves doing their part to fulfill prophecy.
25 Now at the cross of Jesus stood his mother Miriam and his mother's sister, who was also named
Miriam--though she was the wife of Cleopas. Mary of Magdala was also there.
26 When Jesus beheld his mother standing there with John, the disciple whom he loved, he told his mother: Woman, behold your son.

27 Then he said to John: Behold your mother. And from that day on, Miriam lived under his roof.
28 After this, Jesus--knowing that he had done all that he needed to do--did one last thing. So to fulfill the Scriptures, he said: I thirst.
29 Now someone had brought along a jar full of non-kosher Roman *posca* [vinegar wine]. So they dipped a sponge in it, put it on a hyssop stick, and lifted it up to his mouth.
30 When Jesus received the *posca*, he said: It is finished! Then he lowered his head and gave up his spirit to death.
31 Meanwhile, the Judeans--because it was the Preparation Day--asked Pilate to break the legs, and finish off those crucified, because they did not want the bodies hanging overnight [for the next day was the Feast of Unleavened Bread, a High Sabbath that fell upon the weekly Sabbath].
32 So the soldiers broke the legs of those on either side of Jesus.
33 But when they saw Jesus was already dead, they did not break his legs.
34 One of the soldiers, however, thrust a spear into his side, and out came a flow of blood and water.
35 John the disciple saw all this, and his record of it is true, and is written down so you can also believe it is true.
36 All this happened so that the Scripture could be fulfilled that said, **A bone of him shall not be broken**.
37 And another verse of Scripture says, **They shall look on him whom they pierced**.
38 After all this, Joseph of Arimathea, a disciple of Jesus--but a secret one because of his fear of the Judean leaders--begged Pilate to let him have Jesus' body. Pilate agreed, and he came and took down the body of Jesus from the cross.
39 Nicodemus, the man who first met Jesus by night, came with him, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds.
40 Then they took the body of Jesus and wrapped it in a linen shroud with the spices, which is how the Judeans bury their dead.
41 Now near the place where Jesus was crucified was a garden, and in it a new tomb [that had never been defiled by anyone else's body being placed in it].
42 They hurriedly laid Jesus within this convenient tomb because the Jewish preparation day was at hand.

JOHN CHAPTER 20

1 Early Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb and found the stone rolled away.
2 Then she ran to Shimon Peter and John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, and told them: They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have laid him!
3 Peter and John thus set out to and ran to the tomb.
4 They ran as fast as they could, but John [--being younger and faster than Peter--] got there first,
5 And he stooped down to peer inside. He saw the linen wraps lying there, but he did not go in.
6 Then Shimon Peter, following behind, arrived and went straight into the tomb, where he also looked over the linen wraps lying.
7 He also saw the linen piece that had been wrapped about his head folded up by itself and laid to the side.
8 Then John, who arrived there first, entered in--and he realized what he was beholding, and believed.
9 But they still didn't understand the Scriptures that revealed Jesus must rise again from the dead.
10 Then the disciples left and returned home.
11 However, Mary of Magdala stood outside the tomb, weeping. As she cried, she stooped down and looked inside the tomb.
12 Inside, she beheld two angels in white sitting [facing each other in the form of the Ark of the Covenant]. One was at the head, and the other was at the feet of where the body of Jesus had lain.
13 And they asked her: Woman, why are you *weeping*? She answered them: Because they have taken away my Lord, and I don't know where they laid him.
14 And when she had said this, she glanced over her shoulder and saw a man standing nearby. She didn't know it was Jesus.
15 Jesus said to her: Woman, why are you crying? Who are you looking for? Mary, supposing he was the gardener, said to him: Sir, if you have taken him someplace, tell me where, and I will go and take him from there.
16 Jesus then called out: Mary! And she turned toward him, exclaiming: *Rabboni*; which is to say, *Great Master*!
17 Jesus told her: You must let me go, for I have not yet ascended to my Father. But go to my brothers and tell them: "I go to ascend to my Father, and your Father, and my God, and your God!"
18 So Mary of Magdala went, and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and she repeated what he had told her.
19 That same Sunday at evening, when the doors were shut and barred, with the disciples hiding in fear from the Judeans, Jesus appeared and stood in their midst. He announced: Peace be to you!
20 After saying this, he displayed the wounds in his wrists and his side--and the disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.
21 Then Jesus repeated: Peace be to you! As my Father has sent me, so I now send you.
22 And when he had said this, he breathed upon them [as God had done to Adam in the beginning], and said: Receive the Holy Spirit!
23 Whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven. Whose sins you do not forgive, they remain.
24 Now one of the twelve, Thomas, called *Didymus* ["the Twin"], wasn't there when Jesus came.
25 When he arrived, the others told him: We have seen the Lord! But he refused to believe it, saying: I won't believe unless I see the nail holes in his wrists, the spear wound in his side, and I put my fingers into the wounds!
26 Eight days later the doors were still shut in the house, and the disciples were still there. But this time Thomas was with them. Then Jesus appeared amongst them, and said: Peace be to you!
27 Then he said to Thomas: Come here, and stick your finger into my wrists, and thrust it into my side so you will be believing instead of faithless!
28 Thomas [shaken to the core] exclaimed: My Lord and my God!
29 Jesus said in return: Thomas, you have believed because you have seen. Blessed are those who have not seen, but who will still believe!
30 Jesus did many other things in the presence of his disciples that are not written down here.
31 But *these* things have been written so that you can continue to have faith that Jesus is the Messiah and Son of God, and that by having this faith, you will have eternal life through who and what he is!

JOHN CHAPTER 21

1 After all this, Jesus again appeared to the disciples at the Sea of Galilee, and this is how it happened:
2 Shimon Peter, Thomas the twin, Nathaniel of Cana in Galilee, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were gathered together.
3 Shimon Peter said to them: I'm going fishing. The others responded: We'll go with you. So they got in a boat and went out onto the lake. They fished all night long, but could catch nothing.

4 When morning came, Jesus appeared on shore but they did not know it was he.
5 Jesus called out to them: Boys--have you caught any fish? They shouted back: No!
6 Then he told them: Cast your net on the right side of the boat, and you'll catch some! They did as he said, and the net became so full of fish that they could not pull it into the boat!
7 It was then that John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, told Peter: It's the Lord! When Shimon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he threw on his tunic, for he was naked, and jumped into the lake, swimming for shore.
8 The others rowed to shore in their small boat, being about a hundred yards distant, dragging the net and its fish with them.
9 As soon as they landed, they beheld a fire of coals already prepared with some fish cooking on them. There was also some bread.
10 Jesus told them: Bring some of the fish you've caught.
11 Shimon Peter then went over and single-handedly drew the net onto the shore. It was filled with a hundred and fifty-three large fish! Even so, the net did not break.
12 Jesus told them: Come and eat. None of the disciples, meanwhile, presumed to ask, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord.
13 Jesus then came up, took some bread, and distributed it to the disciples along with the fish.
14 This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he had risen from the dead.
15 After they had eaten, Jesus turned to Shimon Peter, and asked: Shimon, son of Jonah, do you love me with your whole being--more than you do fishing? Peter answered: Yes, Lord, you know I love you [like my dearest friend]. To this, Jesus told him: Feed my little sheep.
16 Then Jesus said to him a second time: Shimon, son of Jonah, do you love me with your whole being? Peter again answered: Yes, Lord, you know I love you [like my dearest friend]! So Jesus said: Shepherd my little sheep.
17 Jesus now asked him a third time: Shimon, son of Jonah, do you love me? Peter was now grieved that Jesus had asked a third time "Do you love me?" So he said back: Lord--you know all things. You know I love you! Jesus said: Feed my little sheep!
18 Truly, truly, I say to you: When you were young, you would put a belt on and go to wherever you wanted. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands and another will put a belt around you and then take you where you won't want to go.
19 Jesus spoke this to signify the sort of death Peter would have that would glorify God. Then he added: Follow me!
20 Peter then turned back and spotted the disciple whom Jesus loved--the one who had leaned on Jesus' breast and asked: 'Lord, who is it that will betray you?'
21 Glancing back at him, Peter asked: What will happen to *John*, Lord?
22 Jesus responded: If I desire that he remain alive until my return, what business is that of yours? You follow me!
23 Then an incorrect oral tradition circulated amongst the brethren that John would not die [before Jesus' return to earth]. But Jesus did not tell Peter, "He won't die"; he said, "If I desire that he remain alive until my return, what business is that of yours?"
24 I John, am the one testifying about these things, and am the one who wrote them down. [And we know his testimony is true!]
25 And there are also many other things that Jesus did in his life--so many, in fact, that I don't think that the world could contain all the books it would take to write them down in! Amen.

Acts

ACTS CHAPTER 1

1 In the Gospel I wrote to you earlier, O Theophilus, I set down in writing an account of all that *Jesus* began to do and teach,
2 Until the day he was received back into heaven, after he--through the Holy Spirit--had given final orders to the apostles whom he had chosen.
3 It was to these same apostles that Jesus showed himself alive after his suffering and death on the cross for forty days afterward by many infallible proofs as he discoursed about the Kingdom of God.
4 At one point, when he was with them as a group, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, "Which," he said, "you have heard me speak of.
5 "For John truly 'baptized with water,' but you will be baptized with the *Holy Spirit* not many days from now!"
6 Now when the disciples were gathered together at one point, they asked him: [Lord--will you *now* free Israel from Rome?]
7 But he answered: It is none of your business to know what the Father has in mind, and when He will do it.
8 All you need to know is that you will receive power after the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will testify about me throughout Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and then the uttermost parts of the world! [However, you will see, as our story develops, that the apostles did not immediately do this, and that God had to light a fire under them to actually get them to go out and *spread* the Gospel as Jesus had commanded.]
9 Now after Jesus had said these things, they watched as he ascended until he was lost to view in a cloud of glory.
10 And while they gazed, awestruck, toward heaven, two men in white robes appeared, standing by them.
11 They said: You men of Galilee--why do you stand and gaze up toward heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken from you up to heaven, will return in similar manner.
12 Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, which is under a mile from Jerusalem and within the amount of distance
a Jew can travel on the Sabbath.
13 When they reached the city, they entered an upper room in a house where they lodged. Those staying there included: Peter, James, John, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Jude the brother of James.
14 These all, with one heart, devoted themselves to prayer with some of Jesus' women followers, along with Miriam his mother, and his kinsmen.
15 During this period, Peter stood up amongst the hundred and twenty [chief] disciples of Jesus, and said:
16 Men and brothers: There is a prophecy that must be fulfilled, which David made under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit regarding Judas--the betrayer who guided the mob to Jesus.
17 For he was numbered among us, and was a part of this ministry.
18 [As was prophesied,] Judas wound up *purchasing the potter's field with his blood money*. And [--as his body hung on the tree until the rope broke--] he fell down headlong, and burst his bowels.
19 Note: Everyone living in Jerusalem knew about this, and they even named the field *Aceldama*, which, in the native tongue, means the *Blood Field*.
20 [Peter continued:] For it is written in the Psalms, **Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein:** and **…his bishoprick let another take**.
21 So I suggest that from amongst the group of followers here who have been a part of our group during Jesus' ministry,
22 Who were with us from the time of John's baptism until Jesus was taken up from us, that we choose and ordain one of them to replace Judas, and give testimony of Jesus' resurrection along with us.
23 So they selected two worthy candidates: Joseph called bar Sabbas, surnamed Justus; and Matthias.
24 And they prayed, saying: You, Lord, who know the hearts of all men--show which of these two you want for this position,
25 So he can participate in the ministry and apostleship from which Judas, through his sin, fell so he could go to his own true place [in hell].
26 So they cast lots, and Matthias won, joining the eleven as the twelfth apostle [replacing Judas].

ACTS CHAPTER 2

1 Now when the 50 days to count for the Feast of Pentecost [*Shavuot*] were accomplished, they were in one accord [at the Temple].
2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire [Court of Women] where they were sitting.
3 And [--as had happened at Sinai when the Law was given--] cloven tongues of fire appeared upon their heads.
4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak in different languages as the Spirit enabled them to.
5 At this time, devout Jews from across the world were staying in Jerusalem for the Feast.
6 When they heard the noise, the crowd came to investigate, and they were puzzled because everyone heard them speaking in their own languages.
7 They were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another: Look--aren't those people speaking all Galileans?
8 How is it we all hear them speaking fluently in our native languages?
9 Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Mesopotamians, [Hebrew-speaking] Judeans, those from Cappadocia, Pontus, and Turkey,
10 Phrygians, Pamphylians, Egyptians, Libyans from around Cyrene, and strangers from Rome, Jews and proselytes,
11 Cretes and Arabians--all of us hear them talking, in fluent dialects, about the wonderful deeds of God!
12 And they were amazed and dumbfounded, asking each other: What does this all mean?!
13 Others, mocking, said: These men are full of sweet wine!
14 But Peter, arising with the eleven other apostles, proclaimed: You men of Judea, and all you who dwell in Jerusalem--know this, and give attention to my words!
15 These are not drunk as you think, since it's only the third hour of the day.
16 But this is an example of what was spoken by the prophet Joel:
17 **And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your son and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:**
18 **And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:**
19 **And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke:**
20 **The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come:**
21 **And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved**.

22 You men of Israel, listen carefully! You all know about Jesus the Nazarene--a man who proved he had God's approval by the miracles, wonders and signs he performed among you.
23 This same Jesus, who was allowed to fall into your hands by God's sovereign foreknowledge and will, you took and--using the wicked Romans to do your dirty work--crucified and murdered.
24 But God raised him up, having freed him from the pangs of death, because it was not possible that the grave could hold him back.
25 David prophesied about this, saying: **I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved:**
26 **Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope:**
27 **Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell** [*Sheol*]**, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.**
28 **Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.**
29 Men and brothers, let me speak freely about the Patriarch David, who is dead and buried, and whose tomb is here to this day.
30 David, being a prophet, and knowing that God had made an oath that a descendant of his--physically speaking--would be raised up as Messiah to sit upon his throne,
31 Foresaw and wrote that the same Messiah would die and be resurrected from the dead so his soul would not be left in *Sheol*, neither would his flesh rot and turn to bones.
32 It is this same Jesus that God resurrected, and we are all witnesses to it!
33 Therefore Jesus, having been exalted by the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of [authority to baptize in] the Holy Spirit, has now sent forth this demonstration of Holy Spirit as you see and hear.
34 For *David* is not the one who ascended into the heavens, as he admitted when he wrote: **The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou of my right hand,**
35 **Until I make thy foes thy footstool.**
36 Therefore, let all the house of Israel know, in no uncertain terms, that God has made this same Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah!
37 Now when the crowd heard these words, they were struck to the core with the implications of all this, and they asked Peter and the other apostles: Men and brothers--what shall we do?
38 Then Peter responded: Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins--and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit!
39 For this promise is made to you, your children, and to all [the Gentiles] that are "**afar off**," as many as the Lord our God will call!
40 Peter continued on with many other words, testifying about Jesus and telling the people: Save yourselves from this perverted generation [that Jesus prophesied would reap the judgment of God].
41 Then those who joyfully responded to the message were baptized, and that same day three thousand new souls were added to the Messianic community.
42 And they walked zealously in the apostles' doctrines, fellowshipping together, [taking Communion], and praying constantly.
43 Awe came upon everyone, for the apostles performed numerous signs and wonders.
44 And all the believers were like brothers, and called none of their possessions their own,
45 But sold their goods and possessions, distributing the proceeds to everyone who was in lack.
46 And they worshipped daily in the Temple in one accord, [taking Communion], and eating the love feast at various homes in a spirit of joy and absolute singleness of heart [and mind],
47 All the while praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord daily added to the church as many as who were destined to be saved.

ACTS CHAPTER 3

1 One day, Peter and John went to the Temple for the daily prayers at 3 PM.
2 There was a certain man being carried, who had been born crippled, that every day was laid by the Beautiful Gate to beg alms from those going into the Temple.
3 When he saw Peter and John walking up to enter the Temple, he automatically held up his bowl, asking for alms.
4 Peter, setting his gaze on him along with John, said: Look at us!
5 This caught the man's attention, and he looked over at the two, expecting them to give him some money.
6 But Peter said: Silver and gold I have none of--but what I *do* have, I give to you: In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk!
7 Then he grasped the man by the right hand, and pulled him to his feet. As he did this, the beggar's feet and ankles were strengthened to bear his weight, and they became whole!
8 Leaping up, the man stood, walked, and then followed Peter and John into the Temple court, walking, jumping, and shouting praises to God.
9 Everyone there saw him walking and praising God,
10 And they knew this was the man who regularly sat and begged alms at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple; and they were awestruck at what had happened to him.
11 And as the man who had been healed embraced Peter and John, all the people hurried over to Solomon's Porch, astonished at what was going on.
12 When Peter saw the crowd gathering, he spoke to the people, saying: You men of Israel--why are you surprised at this? Or why are you staring at us, as if--through our own power or holiness--*we* are the ones who made him walk?
13 The God of our fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, did this to glorify His son Jesus--the one whom you gave over to Pilate and denied in the governor's face when he was determined to let him go.
14 You denied the holy and Just One, and asked for a murderer [--bar Abbas--] to be released to you;
15 And you [people of Jerusalem] killed the Prince of Life, whom God raised from the dead. We are witnesses to that fact!
16 And it is through faith in the person and position of Jesus that made this man, whom you all see and have known, strong enough to walk! Yes, faith which is through Jesus made him perfectly sound, and this happened before your very eyes!
17 Now brothers, I know that it was through ignorance that you rejected Jesus, as also did your rulers.
18 But these things, bad as they were, happened to fulfill what God had prophesied through the mouths of the prophets: that the Messiah would suffer--and he has thus fulfilled those prophecies!
19 Repent now, all of you, and turn to God so your sins may truly be blotted out, and God will send you the appointed times of [spiritual] refreshment,
20 And also send back this same Jesus Christ we've been preaching about to you.
21 But for now, heaven has received him until the times of complete restoration of all things God foretold by the mouths of all His holy prophets since the world began comes to pass.

22 Truly, Moses warned our ancestors when he said: **A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.**
23 **And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.**
24 Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel onward, have likewise foretold these times we're in.
25 You are the descendants of the prophets, and inheritors of the covenant that God made with our ancestors when He told Abraham: **And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.**
26 It was to you first that God raised up and sent His son Jesus to bless you, in turning every one of you from his iniquities.

ACTS CHAPTER 4

1 As they continued to preach to the people, the priests, the Levite in charge of the guards, and the Sadducees, accosted Peter and John.
2 They were furious that the two were teaching doctrines affirming resurrection from the dead [--a belief they denied--] using Jesus as proof of it.
3 So they dragged Peter and John off, and locked them away until morning, for it was now dusk.
4 But before they did this around five thousand men believed the message about Jesus.
5 Now the next day, the city rulers, the Jewish elders, the Torah teachers,
6 Together with the former High Priest Annas, the current High Priest Caiaphas--with John, Alexander, and the rest of Caiaphas' kinsmen--gathered at Jerusalem [and formed a sanhedrin to deal with the issue].
7 When they had brought Peter and John [along with the healed man] and stood them up in their midst, they demanded to know: Through what sort of power, or as whose representatives, have you done this miracle?
8 Then Peter, filled with the [wisdom and boldness of] the Holy Spirit, answered: You rulers of the people, and elders of Israel:
9 If you're inquiring of us today as to how the good deed of this crippled man being healed and made whole occurred,
10 Be it known to you, and all Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, and whom God raised from the dead--by *him* does this man now stand before you whole!
11 This is *the stone rejected by you builders that has become the chief cornerstone*!
12 Neither is there salvation in any other name, for there is no other name given under heaven to men by which we can be saved!
13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and understood that they were lay people with no religious training from any known *yeshiva* of Israel, they were amazed; and they noted them as having been disciples of Jesus.
14 And seeing the man standing there [whom everyone in town knew was the beggar from the Beautiful Gate], they had no answer to explain away this miracle.
15 But when they ordered the three out from the council chamber, they conferred among themselves,
16 And said: What shall we do to these men? [We thought that when Jesus died, this would all be over, but] they have done an amazing miracle in front of everyone in Jerusalem, and we can't explain our way around it!
17 But that it spread no further among the people, let us threaten them, and order them not to speak or teach to anyone in the name of Jesus.
18 Then they called Peter and John back into the chamber, and ordered them to stop all evangelizing and teaching in the name of Jesus.
19 But Peter and John stood up to them and replied: You tell us--do you think God would have us obey you rather than Him?
20 We have seen what we have seen, and have heard what we have heard, and God forbid we do other than shout it from the housetops!
21 So after the council threatened them further, they released them because they could think of no charge to fabricate against the two, what with thousands of people in the Temple courts glorifying God over what had been done.
22 For the man who was miraculously healed was over forty years old [and everyone in town had seen him crippled and begging in the same spot for decades].
23 Once they were released, Peter and John went back to the community, and reported what the chief priests and elders had told them.
24 When the other followers of Jesus heard that, they lifted their voices to God in unison, and said: Lord, you are God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them.
25 By the mouth of your servant David you said: **Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?**
26 **The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ.**
27 Truly Herod, Pontius Pilate, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, banded together against Your holy child Jesus, whom You anointed,
28 To fulfill what was in control of Your hand, and in Your divine plan from the beginning.
29 Now, Lord, look down and see their threats, and grant to Your servants the boldness to speak Your Message,
30 By stretching forth Your hand to heal, and allowing signs and wonders to be done in the name of Your holy child Jesus!
31 After they prayed this, the place they were assembled at was shaken, and they were [again] filled with the Holy Spirit, and proclaimed the Message of God, point by point, with utter conviction, unmoved by any opposition.
32 And the multitude of believers were of one heart and soul, and none of them claimed their possessions as their own, but they shared what they had with all fellow believers who were in need.
33 And with great miracle-working power, the apostles testified to the reality of Jesus' resurrection, and great grace from God was on all the community.
34 Neither was there any within the community who lacked anything, for as many who were wealthy, and had land or houses, sold them as need arose, and brought the money,
35 Giving it to the apostles to distribute as needed; and they, in turn, gave to every man as he had need.
36 Now a man named Joses, who was nicknamed Barnabas--meaning Son of Consolation--by the apostles, a Levite from Cypress,
37 Sold some land he had there and brought the money, presenting it to the apostles to use as they thought best.

ACTS CHAPTER 5

1 But there was a man named Ananias who, with Sapphira his wife, sold some land.
2 He and his wife held back part of the proceeds, while still claiming they had donated the entire amount to the apostles to use as they thought best.
3 But Peter said: Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to cause you to lie to the Holy Spirit, and keep back part of the money you sold the land for?

4 This was your property, and after selling it wasn't the money yours to do with as you wished? Why have you plotted like this in your heart? It is not men you have lied to, but God!
5 At hearing these words, Ananias fell down dead, and a great fear fell upon those who heard of this.
6 Some young men in the community then rose up, wrapped him in a shroud, carried him out of the city, and buried him.
7 Three hours later, his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.
8 Peter asked her: Did you sell some land for such-and-such a price? And she said: Yes--for that price.
9 Then Peter told her: How is it that you both conspired to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they shall carry you out as well!
10 Immediately Sapphira fell down dead at Peter's feet, and the young men returning from Ananias' burial came in and found her lying there. Then they carried *her* out to bury next to her husband.
11 And great fear came upon the whole church and upon as many as heard of these incidents.
12 And the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people; and the Messianic community, with one heart, gathered regularly in Solomon's Porch.
13 Others were afraid to join them publicly, but everyone esteemed them.
14 And many more believers were added to the ranks of the Lord, both men and women.
15 So many people believed that they brought the sick out into the streets, laying them on sleeping mats and couches, that even Peter's shadow would fall upon some of them [and heal them].
16 People also came in from the cities around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and the demon-possessed, and every person was healed.
17 Finally it was too much for the High Priest, and he rose up with his fellow Sadducees in rage,
18 And ordered the apostles arrested and jailed.
19 But that night an angel of the Lord opened the doors and brought them out, saying:
20 Go stand in the Temple, and spread the testimony of this life to the people!
21 When they heard that, they returned to the Temple early in the morning and continued to teach. Meanwhile, Caiaphas and his cronies came together and convened both their city Sanhedrin, along with the Great Sanhedrin of Israel, to come up with a joint solution to the problem of the disciples. Then they ordered them all brought forth from the prison [for interrogation].
22 But when the officers came to the jail and found the apostles gone, they returned, saying:
23 The jail was locked tight and the guards were standing outside the doors--but when we unlocked them, the prisoners were gone!
24 Now when the High Priest, the Levite over the Temple guards, and the chief priests were told this, they wondered what new problems would now arise.
25 Then someone came in, and told them: The men you jailed are out in the Temple courts, teaching their doctrines to the masses!
26 The Levite in command of the guards then went out with his officers and escorted them peacefully to the assembly, because they feared the crowds might stone them [if they abused the pair in public].
27 So when they had brought them before the assembly, the High Priest spoke,
28 Saying: Didn't we give you a direct command not to teach as representatives of Jesus?! Instead, you've filled Jerusalem with your doctrines, and on top of that, you're blaming us for Jesus' death [when it was the *Romans* who crucified him]!
29 Then Peter and the other apostles replied: We must obey *God*, rather than man.
30 The God of our fathers raised Jesus--whom *you* slew and crucified on a "tree"--from the dead!
31 God exalted Jesus with His right hand to be a Prince and Savior, to give Israel repentance and forgiveness of its sins!
32 And we are bearing witness of these things--as is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those obeying *Him* as their ruler [rather than you hypocrites]!
33 When they heard this, Caiaphas' faction was enraged, and began clamoring for their execution.
34 Then the President of the Great Sanhedrin, Hillel's grandson Gamaliel--a Pharisee expert in the Torah who was respected by everyone--stood up in the assembly and called for the apostles to be escorted from the chamber.
35 After they were gone, he spoke: You men of Israel, be careful what you do regarding these men.
36 Remember that in days past, Theudas rose up as a self-appointed revolutionary, gathering a band of four hundred followers, all of whom were eventually slain or put to flight and brought to nothing.
37 After him, Judas the Galilean arose in the days of Augustus' taxation and drew many of the people to him in rebellion. He died, in turn, and *his* followers scattered to the four winds.
38 So this is my advice: Stop harassing these men, and leave them alone. If this plan and what they do is of men, it will bear no fruit and die of its own accord.
39 But if it *is* of God you cannot stop it, and you will find yourselves actually fighting *against* God! [And you know there is no hope for you in that event.]
40 So the two Sanhedrins agreed with his suggestion, and after they summoned back the apostles and gave them a beating for good measure, they told them not to speak as Jesus' representatives. Then they released them.
41 But the apostles instead left the meeting rejoicing that they had been counted worthy to suffer as the ambassadors of Christ,
42 And they did not cease to teach and preach Jesus Christ daily in the Temple and in every house they visited.

ACTS CHAPTER 6

1 In time, as the community swelled with disciples, complaints arose on the part of Greek-speaking proselytes to the faith against the Jewish believers, because their widows were being short-changed in the daily dole.
2 Then the twelve called the whole multitude of disciples together, and told them: It's not good that we must set aside preaching the Message of God to go hand food out at tables.
3 Therefore, brothers, select seven men from among you of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we can appoint over this ministry.
4 And we will devote ourselves full time to prayer and ministry of the Message.
5 The idea pleased everyone, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, along with Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte from Antioch.
6 These were brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid hands on them [and ordained them for this ministry].
7 So the Message of God went forth, and the number of disciples in Jerusalem greatly increased. Even many of the priests came to obey the faith.
8 And Stephen, full of the divine power of God's grace, performed great wonders and miracles among the people.
9 Then some [proselytes to Judaism] from the synagogue of the Libertines [--the Freed Slaves--] who were made up of Cyrenians,

Alexandrians, Cilicians, and some from Turkey, argued with Stephen.
10 But they were unable to counter the wisdom and spirit by which he spoke,
11 So they came up with some false witnesses who made a charge against him, saying: We heard this man speak blasphemously against Moses and God!
12 And they stirred up the people, the city leaders, and the Torah teachers, who rose up and dragged Stephen off to the Sanhedrin.
13 False witnesses were brought in, saying: This man continually blasphemes this Holy Place and the Torah!
14 We've heard him claim that Jesus of Nazareth will destroy the Temple, and will change the traditions we inherited from Moses!
15 And all that sat in the Sanhedrin, who gazed upon him, saw his face shining as if it were the face of an angel.

ACTS CHAPTER 7

1 Then the High Priest asked: Are these accusations true?
2 To this, Stephen replied: Men, brothers, and chief elders of Israel, listen! The God of glory revealed Himself to our ancestor Abraham when he was a dweller in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran,
3 And He told him, *Leave this country and your relatives, and go to a land that I will show you*.
4 So Abraham left the land of the Chaldeans and lived in Haran. Then, after his father had died, God led him to this land, where you all live now.
5 But He did not give it to him at that time as an inheritance, nor did Abraham even set foot on the land where Jerusalem now is, but God promised that He would give it to him, and his descendants after him, as their own--even though Abraham as yet had no son.
6 God also prophesied to him that his descendants would travel to a strange land, and the people there would bring them into bondage and mistreat them for four hundred years.
7 "**And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge**," God said, "**and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place**."
8 And God gave Abraham the covenant of circumcision. So Abraham had Isaac, and circumcised him on his eighth day of birth. Then Isaac had Jacob [and did likewise], and Jacob had the twelve Patriarchs [continuing the custom].
9 But the Patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph as a slave to Egypt. But God was with him,
10 And delivered him out of all his afflictions, giving him favor and wisdom in the eyes of Pharaoh, the King of Egypt; and Pharaoh made
him the overseer over Egypt and all his household.
11 In time, a bad drought and famine hit both Egypt and Canaan, bringing great trouble, and our ancestors could find nothing to eat.
12 But when Jacob heard that wheat was to be had in Egypt, he sent our Patriarchal ancestors there first.
13 The second time they went there, Joseph revealed himself to his brothers, and introduced them to Pharaoh.
14 Then Joseph sent them back with a message to his father Jacob to return with all his family, totaling seventy-five people.
15 So Jacob went down into Egypt and died, as did the Patriarchs.
16 All of them were carried into Shechem and placed in the tomb that Abraham bought from the sons of Hamor, the founder of Shechem.
17 But when the time of the promised deliverance God swore about to Abraham drew near, the Hebrew population exploded in Egypt,
18 Until another Pharaoh came to power who did not know about Joseph.
19 This Pharaoh plotted against our people, and forced our ancestors to expose their male newborn children, intending to kill off our race.
20 In this time Moses, an exceedingly handsome child, was born and then brought up for three months in his father's house.
21 Then, when they finally cast *him* out and exposed him to the elements, Pharaoh's daughter adopted and raised him as her own son.
22 This resulted in Moses learning all the wisdom Egypt had to offer, and he became mighty in word and deed.
23 Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart that he should visit his brothers, the children of Israel.
24 And seeing one of them being mistreated, he defended the man being abused, and slew the Egyptian harming him.
25 He thought that this would show his brother Jews how God was going to use him to deliver them from bondage, but they did not understand.
26 For the next day, when he came upon two of them fighting, he broke them up, hoping to make peace between them, saying, "Men, you are brothers! Why fight like this?!"
27 But the instigator, who started this by wronging his neighbor, pushed him back, saying, "Who made *you* a ruler and judge over us?!
28 "Will you kill me, as you did the Egyptian yesterday?!"
29 Hearing this, Moses fled Egypt, and was a sojourner in the land of Midian, where he had two sons.
30 And after forty years there [--when he had completely abandoned any thought of being a deliverer to his people--] an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a burning bush.
31 When Moses beheld the sight, he was amazed. Then, as he came up to investigate, the voice of the Lord came to him,
32 Saying, "I am the God of your ancestors--the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob!" Then Moses shook in fear, and dared not look.
33 The Lord told him, "Take your sandals off your feet, for this is holy ground you stand upon.
34 "I have seen the affliction of my people in Egypt, and I have heard their cries. I have come down to deliver them. Get up--I will now send *you* into Egypt!"
35 The same Moses whom they had refused, saying, "Who made *you* a ruler and a judge?" was the same one God sent to be a ruler and deliverer through the power of the angel who had appeared to him in the bush.
36 So Moses brought them out after showing them signs and wonders in Egypt, the Red Sea, and in the wilderness for forty years.
37 This is the same Moses who said to the children of Israel, **A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear**.
38 It was also Moses who was with the congregation in the wilderness, and was the
go-between with the angel that spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and who--with our ancestors--received living words of wisdom for us.
39 Our ancestors would not obey him, but rejected him as their hearts turned back to Egypt [and its ways].
40 For they said to Aaron: "Make us idols of some gods to lead us, for we do not know what has happened to this man Moses, who led us out of Egypt!"
41 Then they made a calf at that time [to honor the goddess Hathor/Isis], and performed a sacrifice, being proud of what they had created with their own hands.
42 So God stepped back and allowed them to worship the evil beings of the heavens [represented by heavenly bodies], as was acknowledged in the Scriptures: **O ye house of Israel, have ye**

offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness?
43 **Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.**
44 These same ancestors of ours had the *Tabernacle of Witness* with them in the wilderness, the one God revealed to Moses in outlining its design and construction.
45 That same tabernacle our ancestors, in turn, took with them when Joshua led them into the Promised Land as God drove out before them the Gentiles who had lived there previously; and it remained there until the days of David.
46 Now David found favor with God, and he asked permission to build a temple to the God of Jacob.
47 But it was Solomon who actually built Him a house.
48 In any event, the Most High does not live in temples made with human hands, as the prophet Isaiah said:
45 **Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest?**
50 **Hath not my hand made all these things?**
51 [My point in all this, is that the Jewish people have a bad habit of initially rejecting the man God wants to use to deliver them. That, or they kill the prophets God sends to call them to repentance--and how you are proving that!] You stubborn people, uncircumcised in heart and hearing--you always resist the Holy Spirit [and His call to repentance]! As your ancestors did--so you do!
52 Which of the prophets did your ancestors not persecute? Your ancestors, in their days, slew the ones who warned *them*, and when the Just One came, you became *his* betrayers and murderers!
53 Yes, you--who received the Torah that was ordained and handed over to you by angels, but still have not kept it!
54 Now when they heard these denunciations, they exploded with rage.
55 But Stephen, being filled with the Holy Spirit, gazed up into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at God's right hand.
56 He announced: Look! I see a vision of the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!
57 Then the entire assembly howled with anger and covered their ears [at this blasphemy] as they all charged at him.
58 They dragged him outside of Jerusalem to stone him, and the witnesses [--who had to throw the first stones--] left their cloaks with a young man named Saul to stand watch over.
59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying: Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!
60 Then he knelt down, and cried loudly: Lord, don't hold this sin against them! And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

ACTS CHAPTER 8

1 And this man Saul voted to affirm Stephen's execution. At that same time, a great persecution arose in Jerusalem against the church, and the believers [--especially the Hellenistic ones--] were scattered abroad throughout Judea and Samaria. The apostles, however, remained in Jerusalem.
2 Meanwhile, some devout men carried Stephen out to be buried, and wept greatly over his passing.
3 As for the man Saul, he became a terror to the church, going from house to house, kicking in doors and hauling men and women off to the dungeons.
4 But those who were scattered abroad proclaimed the Message of the Gospel wherever they went.
5 Then Philip went down to a chief city of Samaria, and preached the Messiah to the population.
6 And all the people, with one heart, accepted what Philip told them when they saw and heard about the miracles he performed.
7 For demon spirits came out shouting from those who were possessed by them, and many who were suffering debilitating diseases, and those who were lame, were healed.
8 And there was great joy in that city.
9 But there was a man there named Simon who had previously been a practitioner of the Black Arts, using sorcery to bewitch the people of Samaria and make a big name for himself.
10 Everyone, from the least to the greatest in that city, listened to his opinions, for they said: This man is the great Power, representing God Himself!
11 They had respected him for a long time because he had ensnared them with his sorceries.
12 But when they believed the message Philip brought about the Messianic Kingdom and the person and position of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.
13 Then Simon believed as well, and after being baptized joined himself to Philip, and was amazed at the miracles and signs he saw.
14 Now when word reached the apostles back in Jerusalem that Samaria had received the Message of God, they sent Peter and John,
15 Who went down and prayed for the Samaritans to receive the Holy Spirit.
16 You see, He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they were only baptized [in water] in the name of the Lord Jesus.
17 So they laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Spirit.
18 Now when Simon observed that the Holy Spirit had been imparted through the apostles laying hands on the people, he offered them money,
19 Saying: Give me also the authority to impart the Holy Spirit on whomever I lay hands upon!
20 But Peter responded: You and your silver can perish together for the gall to think that the gift of God could be purchased with mere money!
21 You have no place or part in this sort of ministry, because your heart is not right in God's sight!
22 Repent of your wickedness, and beg God to forgive the evil motivations of your heart if He will!
23 For I perceive that you have fallen prey to a deadly poison, and are bound by iniquity!
24 Then Simon answered: You two--pray to the Lord that none of these things you've spoken will come upon me!
25 So Peter and John, after testifying and preaching the Message of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, preaching the Gospel in many Samaritan villages as they went.
26 As for Philip, the angel of the Lord spoke to him, and said: Get up, and travel south to the desert trail that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.
27 Philip then arose and went, and he chanced to come upon a high court official who oversaw the treasury of the Kandake of Ethiopia. He had come to Jerusalem to worship [at a Festival],
28 And was now returning in a chariot, sitting and reading a scroll of Isaiah the prophet as he went.
29 Then the Spirit told Philip: Go up, and walk with this chariot.
30 So Philip ran up to the chariot, listening as the man read from Isaiah. He asked the man: Do you understand what you're reading?
31 The official replied: How can I, unless someone explains it to me? Then he asked Philip to sit with him in the chariot.
32 The verses of Scripture the eunuch read were these [from Isaiah 53]: **He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth:**

33 **In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.**
34 The official then asked Philip: Tell me--is the prophet speaking about himself, or some other man?
35 Then Philip spoke, and starting with those Scriptures, preached Jesus to him.
36 As they traveled on, they came upon a body of water, and the official said: Look--here is water. What prevents me from being baptized right now?
37 [Philip responded, If you believe with all your heart, then you may. To this, the official replied: I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God!]
38 So he halted the chariot, and both men went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.
39 When they emerged from the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away so the official saw him no more, and he went on his way home, rejoicing.
40 Philip, meanwhile, found himself in Ashdod, and passing through it and the region, he preached to everyone until he came to the great port of Caesarea.

ACTS CHAPTER 9

1 Now Saul--still fanatically vowing to root out and slay the disciples of the Lord--went to Caiaphas, the High Priest,
2 And asked him for documents appointing him as an Inquisitor to the Damascus synagogues, and giving him the authority to bring back in chains any men or women who were followers of "the Way."
3 So he departed with these, but as he was approaching Damascus, suddenly a radiance from heaven shined round about him.
4 And he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him: Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?
5 He answered it: Who are you, Lord? And the Lord said back to him: I am Jesus, the one you're persecuting. [You are wasting your time, *kicking against the pricks*!]
6 [Then Saul, trembling in fear and astonishment, said: Lord, what do you want me to do? So the Lord said back to him:] Get up, and go into the city, and you'll be told what to do.
7 Meanwhile, the men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the sounds of a voice, but seeing no man.
8 And Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he was blind, and his traveling companions led him by the hand until they entered Damascus.
9 For three days there he was blind, and took neither food nor drink.
10 Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias, and the Lord said to him in a vision: Ananias! So he answered: Behold, I am here, Lord!
11 And the Lord said to him: Get up, go to Straight street, and ask at the house of Judah for a man called Saul, from the city of Tarsus, who is praying even now,
12 And has seen a vision of a man named Ananias coming and putting his hand upon him to restore his sight.
13 Then Ananias replied: Lord--I have heard from many about this man, and all the evil he has done to your righteous ones in Jerusalem;
14 And here he has the authority from the chief priests to apprehend all who call upon you as Lord here in Damascus.
15 But the Lord answered him: Go! For he is a chosen vessel of mine, to proclaim who and what I am to the Gentiles, to kings, and to the children of Israel!
16 For I will show him how greatly he will have to suffer for the sake of who and what I am.
17 So Ananias went as he was told, and came into the house of Judah; and laying hands on Saul, he said: Brother Saul, the Lord--even Jesus--who appeared to you as you traveled down the road to here, has sent me so your sight may be restored, and that you might be filled with the Holy Spirit.
18 And immediately, it was as if scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. Then he arose, and was baptized.
19 After eating some meat, his strength returned. Thereafter, Saul remained for a while with some disciples from the Messianic community in Damascus.
20 Afterward, he began to preach in the synagogues that: "Jesus is the Messiah and king of Israel!"
21 But all who heard him were shocked, saying: Wasn't this the man who destroyed those who called Jesus Lord in Jerusalem, and who came here to bring his followers back to Jerusalem in chains to the chief priests?
22 But Saul argued increasingly more powerfully on this point, and confounded the unbelieving Jews at Damascus, proving [Scripturally] that Jesus is the Messiah.
23 After a long time of this, some of the unbelieving Jews decided they'd had enough of him, so they schemed to kill him.
24 But word got back to Saul of their planned assassination, and their teams of assassins watching the city gates, day and night, in hope of killing him.
25 So the disciples smuggled him out of the city by night, lowering him over the wall on a [braided rope].
26 When Saul returned to Jerusalem, he tried to join the community there, but they were all afraid of him, and refused to believe that he was a true disciple of Christ.
27 But Barnabas took a chance on him, and brought him to the apostles. He explained that Paul had seen the Lord as he went, and that Jesus had spoken to him. He also testified how Paul had boldly preached as an ambassador of Jesus in Damascus.
28 [So the apostles accepted him,] and he accompanied them in and out of Jerusalem.
29 He spoke boldly as an ambassador of Jesus, focusing on heated debates with the Hellenistic Jews, but *they* sought to kill him too.
30 When the brothers in Jerusalem found out about this, they brought him down to Caesarea, and then sent him home to Tarsus.
31 Then [with Saul gone], the churches in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace again, and were strengthened, walking in the fear of the Lord and in the encouragement of the Holy Spirit. And their ranks swelled with new members.
32 Now it came to pass, as Peter was making a sojourn to visit the various groups of believers, he came to the community of the righteous who dwelt in Lydda.
33 There, he found a certain paralytic man named Aeneas, who had lain in bed for eight years.
34 And Peter told him: Aeneas, Jesus Christ makes you whole--get up and make your bed! At Peter's word, Aeneas got up immediately.
35 And all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and embraced Jesus as Lord [as a result of this miracle].
36 Now at Joppa there was a well-known woman disciple named Tabitha--Dorcas in Greek--who was renowned for her good deeds and the aid she gave the needy.
37 While Peter was in the area, she fell sick and died, and after they [gave her a ritual baptism for the dead], they laid her body out in an upper room.
38 Since Lydda was near Joppa, and since the believers heard Peter was there, they sent two men to him, asking him to immediately come to them.
39 Then Peter arose, and followed them back to Joppa. When they arrived, Peter was escorted to the upper chamber where the body was. In it, all the local widows were mourning, and they showed

Peter the tunics and clothing Dorcas had made for them while she was alive.
40 But Peter ordered them out of the room, then kneeled down and prayed. Then, turning to the body, he said: Tabitha, arise! And she opened her eyes, and when her gaze fell upon Peter, she sat up.
41 Then he took her by the hand and helped her up; and when he had called the righteous and the widows, presented her alive to them.
42 And word of this spread through all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.
43 Peter thereafter stayed for quite some time in Joppa, lodging with a man named Simon who was a tanner of skins.

ACTS CHAPTER 10

1 Now there was a certain chief centurion [--a *Principale*--] in Caesarea named Cornelius, an officer in the "Italian Band."
2 A devout man, Cornelius and his household were "God-fearers" [--semi-proselytes to full Judaism]. He was also generous, giving alms to the people, and always offering prayers to God.
3 Around three PM one day [as he prayed], he had a vision of an angel of God coming into the house and calling out: Cornelius!
4 When Cornelius looked at him, he was terrified, and said: What is it, Sir? The angel replied: Your prayers and alms have come up to God in testimony of you.
5 So now, send messengers to Joppa, and summon Shimon, surnamed Peter,
6 Who is staying with one named Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the seashore. He will tell you what you should do.
7 After the angel who had spoken departed, Cornelius summoned two household servants, along with a trusted legionnaire who was his personal attendant.
8 And after telling them what had happened, he sent them to Joppa.
9 The next day, as they were approaching the city, Peter went up to the roof of the house to pray at noontime.
10 He became very hungry, and asked for some lunch. But while it was being prepared, he fell into a trance.
11 He saw heaven revealed, and from it descended a great sheet let down together by the four corners like a sack [holding something inside]. It fell down to earth and unfolded,
12 Revealing its contents to be all sorts of [non-kosher] four-footed animals, reptiles, and birds.
13 And a voice spoke, saying: Rise, Peter! Kill, and eat!
14 Peter replied: No, Lord! I have never eaten impure or unclean meats!
15 But the voice said a second time: What God has cleansed, do not call "unclean"!
16 Three times the voice said this, and then the sheet was snatched back into heaven.
17 Now while Peter was totally confused about what the vision meant, the men sent from Cornelius had asked where to find Simon's house, and they now arrived at its gate.
18 They called out, asking whether a man called Shimon, surnamed Peter, was staying there.
19 And while Peter, back on the roof, was wondering about the vision, the Spirit said to him: Behold--three men are seeking you.
20 Get up, go down to them, and go with them, doubting nothing, for I have sent them here.
21 So Peter went down to the men who had been sent by Cornelius, and said to them: I am the man you're asking about. Why have you come?
22 And they said in response: Cornelius the centurion--a just man and "God-fearer"--who has a good reputation among all the Jews, was warned by God through a holy angel to send for you to come to his house so he can hear whatever you have to say to him.
23 So Peter called them in and let them stay the night. The next morning, Peter, along with a few of the brethren from Joppa, went with them.
24 It took them a day, and then they entered Caesarea, where Cornelius was waiting for them, having called together his relatives and good friends.
25 As Peter entered his yard, Cornelius came and fell at his feet, doing obeisance to him.
26 But Peter lifted him back to his feet, saying: Stand up! I myself am also just a man.
27 And as Peter continued talking with him, he entered Cornelius' home and saw the many people who were assembled there.
28 Peter spoke to them, and said: You know that it is a violation of our [oral] Torah for a man to keep company with, or even enter the house of a Gentile. But God has shown me that I should not call any man *impure* or *unclean*.
29 That is why I came to you without hesitation as soon as I was summoned. Now why have you sent for me?
30 Cornelius answered: Four days ago, I was fasting to this very hour, and at the ninth hour I was praying in my house when a man appeared before me dressed in shining robes.
31 He said: "Cornelius, your prayer is heard, and your alms have come up to God in testimony of you.
32 "Send messengers to Joppa, and summon Shimon, surnamed Peter. He is staying in the house of a man named Simon, a tanner living by the seaside. When he comes, he will tell you what you should do."
33 Thus, I immediately sent word to you, and you are kind to have come. So here we are, at God's disposal, to hear everything He commands you to tell us.
34 Then Peter opened his mouth, and said: I see now it is indeed true that God prefers no man over another.
35 But among every ethnic group, He accepts one who honors Him, and lives uprightly.
36 The message that God sent to the children of Israel, declaring peace [with Him], through the preaching of Jesus Christ--the Lord of all--
37 Is a message I am sure you are aware of. It was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and originated in Galilee, after the baptism that John preached about.
38 That message was, of course, about how God anointed Jesus Christ of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power--who went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.
39 And we are witnesses of all the things he did, both in the lands of the Judeans and in Jerusalem itself--up until they slew him, and hung him on a "tree."
40 But God raised him up on the third day, and showed him publicly once again alive,
41 Not to everyone, but to those chosen by God to be witnesses--even us, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.
42 And he ordered us to preach to the people and affirm that he is the one whom God ordained to judge the living and the dead.
43 To him, all the prophets affirm that through who and what he is, anyone who believes in him will receive the remission of their sins.
44 Now while Peter was speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all of those who heard the message.
45 And the Jewish believers who came with Peter were astonished to behold the gift of the Holy Spirit poured out upon Gentiles,
46 For they heard them speak with Tongues, and glorify God. Then Peter responded by saying:

47 Can any man forbid these to receive water baptism, seeing they have received the Holy Spirit just as us?
48 And Peter commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they begged him to stay with them for a few days.

ACTS CHAPTER 11

1 Meanwhile, the apostles and brothers in the community back in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the Message of God.
2 But when Peter returned to Jerusalem, some Jewish believers confronted him,
3 Saying: You went into the house of uncircumcised Gentiles, and ate with them?!
4 But Peter related the story from the beginning, and told them:
5 I was praying in the city of Joppa, and in a trance I saw a vision. I beheld a sheet let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came near to me.
6 When I looked at it, I saw [non-kosher] four-footed beasts of the earth, wild animals, reptiles, and birds of the air.
7 And I heard a voice tell me, "Arise, Peter—kill, and eat!"
8 But I said, "No, Lord--for nothing impure or unclean has ever entered my mouth!"
9 But the voice answered me from heaven again, and said: "What God has cleansed, call not *unclean*!"
10 This happened three times, then the sheet and its contents were taken back to heaven.
11 At the same time, three men sent from Caesarea arrived at the house I was staying at.
12 The Spirit had me go with them, doubting nothing. Also, these six other members of the brethren went with me, and we *all* actually went into the man's house.
13 And he showed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood before him, and said, "Send men to Joppa, and call for Shimon, whose surname is Peter,
14 "Who will tell you words whereby you and your household shall be saved."
15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them as He did upon us at the beginning.
16 Then I remembered what the Lord had said: "John certainly baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the *Holy Spirit*."
17 So then, since God saw fit to give them the same gift He gave to us who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ--who was I to oppose what God was doing?
18 When they heard these things, they relaxed and glorified God, saying: Then God has apparently granted repentance to eternal life to the Gentiles as well!
19 Meanwhile, those who had been scattered abroad after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cypress, and Antioch, preaching the Message--but only to the Jews.
20 But some of them from Cypress and Cyrene, when they arrived at Antioch, spoke to the Greeks as well, telling them about the Lord Jesus.
21 And the hand of the Lord was with them, and many Greek Gentiles believed, and turned to the Lord.
22 Word eventually reached Jerusalem about this, and the church there assigned Barnabas to go to Antioch.
23 When he got there and saw how much grace of God was on display, he rejoiced and encouraged them to devote themselves, body and soul, to the Lord.
24 This Barnabas was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith. And because of him, many were added to the ranks of the Lord.
25 Then Barnabas left for Tarsus to find Saul.
26 When he did, he brought him to Antioch, and for a whole year they joined themselves to the church there, and taught many people. It was at this time in Antioch that the disciples first called themselves *Christians*.
27 And in those days, prophets from Jerusalem came to Antioch.
28 One of them, named Agabus, stood up and proclaimed by the Spirit that there would be a great drought and famine throughout the land. This prophecy came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.
29 Then the disciples, each as they were able, decided to send relief to the brothers who dwelt in Judea.
30 They did this, entrusting the money to Barnabas and Saul, who delivered it to the elders.

ACTS CHAPTER 12

1 Now about that time, Herod Agrippa [--Antipas having been removed by Caesar, and banished--] took action to persecute certain [leaders] of the church.
2 And he had James, the [older] brother of John, slain with the sword.
3 When he saw this pleased the Judean leaders, he moved to take Peter as well during the Feast of Passover/Unleavened Bread.
4 So Agrippa took Peter into custody, and jailed him, placing sixteen soldiers to keep watch over him until he could [slay him publicly after Passover].
5 Peter thus was locked in prison, but the church prayed to God day and night for him.
6 [Then the day approached when Herod would end Peter's life.] But that night, Peter had been sleeping between two guards, his arms chained securely, with other guards watching the locked gate of the prison.
7 Then an angel of the Lord came to him, shining in a great radiance that lit up the prison, and he poked Peter in the side and pulled him to his feet, saying: Get up quickly! The chains also fell off Peter's hands.
8 The angel spoke further, telling him: Get dressed, and put your sandals on! Peter did this, and the angel said: Pull your cloak around you, and follow me.
9 And Peter left the prison, following the angel, but this was all so unbelievable that he thought he must be having a vision.
10 When they were past the first two guard posts they came to the iron gate that leads out into the city, and it swung open for them. They went out, moving down the street, and the angel left Peter.
11 When Peter's senses returned, he said to himself, *Now I know for sure that God sent His angel and has delivered me from Herod, and from the plots of the Judeans!*
12 After pondering this, he arrived at the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where many were gathered together in prayer.
13 As Peter knocked at the gate, a servant named Rhoda came out to see who was there.
14 When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed that she didn't even let him in, but ran inside, and told them that Peter was out at the gate.
15 They told her: You're insane! But she insisted it was true. Then they said: It must be his guardian angel!
16 But Peter kept pounding, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished.
17 But he, gesturing for them to be quiet, related how the Lord had delivered him from prison. And he told them: Go tell James and the brethren about this. Then he left Jerusalem for another city.
18 Now as soon as dawn came, the soldiers panicked over Peter's disappearance.
19 And when Herod Agrippa searched for Peter, who could not be found anywhere, he interrogated the guards, then had them executed. Then he left Judea for Caesarea, and remained there.

20 Now Herod Agrippa had been in an angry dispute with Tyre and Sidon, but representatives of both cities came on a peace mission. Since they had earlier gotten in good with Agrippa's chamberlain Blastus, they offered peace terms because their country relied upon Agrippa's sphere of influence for sustenance.
21 And on a certain day Agrippa, dressed in sartorial apparel, sat upon a throne and made a speech to them.
22 And the people, mesmerized, shouted: This is the voice of a god, not a man!
23 And because Agrippa accepted their praise without giving God the glory, an angel of the Lord smote him, and he was eaten up from the inside out by worms. And so he died.
24 But the Message of God grew, and spread among the people.
25 Barnabas and Saul eventually returned from Jerusalem after delivering the money, and they took young John Mark with them.

ACTS CHAPTER 13

1 Now within the membership of the church of Antioch were a number of prophets and teachers. These included: Barnabas, Simeon, nicknamed Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen, who had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch, and finally Saul.
2 As they worshipped the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said: Set apart Barnabas and Saul from you for the work I have called them to.
3 So after they had fasted and prayed, they laid hands upon them [to ordain them for service], and sent them away.
4 So the two, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, journeyed to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cypress.
5 Finding themselves in Salamis, they preached the Message of God in the Jewish synagogues, and John Mark assisted them.
6 When they had traveled about the island to Paphos, they encountered a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet called bar Jesus,
7 Who had attached himself to the Proconsul of the island, Sergius Paulus. Now Paulus was a well-read and intelligent man, and he summoned Barnabas and Saul, desiring to hear the Message of God they were preaching.
8 But "Elymas"--whose name means "sorcerer"--argued against them, hoping to turn the Proconsul away from the faith.
9 Then Saul--using the name Paul by then--was filled with the Holy Spirit, and fixed his gaze upon him,
10 Saying: You lying charlatan! You child of the devil, full of subtlety and vice, and enemy of all righteousness! Will you not stop perverting the correct pathways of the Lord?!
11 Now behold--the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind, not seeing the sun for a while! At this, immediately a mist and darkness fell upon the man's eyes, and he stumbled about, trying to find someone to lead him by the hand.
12 Then the Proconsul, when he saw with astonishment what had happened, believed the teaching about the Lord.
13 Now when Paul and his companions sailed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia, and here John Mark left them to return home to Jerusalem.
14 When they departed Perga, they made their way to Antioch in Pisidia, going into its synagogue, and sitting down on the Sabbath day with the congregation.
15 After the reading from the Old Testament, the officials of the synagogue sent someone over to tell them: You men and brothers--if you have any word of encouragement for the people, please say it.
16 Then Paul stood up, and extending his hand [to quiet the assembly], said: Men of Israel, and any "God-fearers," please listen.
17 The God of the people of Israel chose our ancestors, and exalted them when they were living as outsiders in the land of Egypt. Then, with His mighty, outstretched arm, He brought them out of it.
18 And for about forty years He endured their misbehavior in the wilderness.
19 And after He destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He divided their lands to the people by lot.
20 After this, He provided judges over the people for about four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet.
21 Later, they desired a king, and God gave them Saul, the son of Kish, from the tribe of Benjamin. He reigned for forty years.
22 After God removed him, He raised up David to be their king, about whom He testified, and said: **I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will**.
23 Of David's line of descendants has God, according to His promise, raised up a savior for Israel, Jesus,
24 When John the Baptist, prior to his arrival, preached his baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.
25 And as John fulfilled his purpose and ministry, he said, "Who do you think I am? I am not [the Messiah]. But there is one coming after me, whose sandals I am not even worthy to loosen!"
26 Men and brothers, you children descended from Abraham; and also you Gentile "God-fearers"--this message of salvation is sent to you!
27 For those who live in Jerusalem, and their rulers--because they did not recognize who he was, nor did they understand the voices of the prophets that are read every Sabbath--fulfilled the prophecies about him by condemning him.
28 And though they found no legitimate cause to slay him, they still wanted Pilate to crucify him.
29 And when they had fulfilled all the prophecies about him, they took him down from the "tree," and laid him in a tomb.
30 But God raised him from the dead!
31 And he was seen for quite a few days by those who had followed him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who even now testify of that to the people.
32 And we proclaim to you the good news--how the promise that was made to our ancestors,
33 Is now fulfilled in the time of us, their descendants, for He has raised Jesus up from the dead. As it is also said in the second Psalm: **Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.**
34 Now so far as his being raised from the dead by God, never to return to corruption, God also said: **I will give you the sure mercies of David.**
35 And He said in another Psalm: **Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.**
36 Now David, after he had served his own generation of people by God's will, died and was laid in the grave as were his ancestors before him, and his body moldered away in corruption.
37 But he, whom God raised up again, saw no corruption of his body.
38 So be it known to you, men and brothers, that we preach to you there is forgiveness of sin only through this man!
39 And by him, all who believe are made right with God--even for [intentional] sins that could not be justified through Mosaic Law and its sacrificial system.
40 So beware, lest what has been warned by the prophets comes to pass upon you:
41 **Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.**
42 Now after the service ended and the people were departing the synagogue, they asked that Paul explain more of these things at the next Sabbath.
43 Meanwhile, many of the Jews and "God-fearers" followed Paul and Barnabas after the service was over, and the pair continued

explaining their doctrines, encouraging them to continue in God's grace.
44 The next Sabbath, almost the whole town came together to hear the Message of God.
45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with jealousy, and spoke against Paul's doctrines, contradicting and denouncing them.
46 Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold, and said: It was required that the Message of God should be spoken to you first, but seeing that you thrust it away from you, and prove yourselves unworthy of everlasting life--we turn to the Gentiles!
47 For so has God ordered us, saying: "I have called you to be a light to the Gentiles, to bring salvation to the ends of the earth!"
48 When the Gentiles heard this they rejoiced, and glorified the Message of the Lord; and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed,
49 And the Message of the Lord was proclaimed throughout all the region.
50 However, the [unbelieving] Jews stirred up the religious and upright women, along with the key men of the city, and brought persecution upon Paul and Barnabas, causing them to be driven from the area.
51 But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and went to Iconium.
52 Meanwhile, those who had received their message were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.

ACTS CHAPTER 14

1 Eventually, in Iconium, the two went into the Jewish synagogue and preached with such power that a host of Jews, and even Greeks, believed.
2 But the unbelieving Jews caused trouble by stirring up the Gentiles, and prejudicing them against the brethren.
3 So the two remained there for a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who confirmed their testimony of his grace by exhibiting signs and wonders through their hands.
4 But the population of the city was split, with some supporting the Jews, and some the apostles.
5 And when things turned violent, with a mob of Gentiles, Jews, and local leaders seeking to drag them off and stone them,
6 Paul and Barnabas got word of it, and fled to Lycaonia, taking refuge in the cities of Lystra, Derbe, and the surrounding area.
7 And there they preached the Gospel.
8 Now there was a man sitting at Lystra unable to rise or walk, for his feet had been crippled from his mother's womb.
9 This man had been hearing Paul's sermons [and was visibly filled with faith]. So Paul fixed his gaze on him, and perceiving that he had the faith to receive healing,
10 Cried out: Stand up on your feet! And the man did so, then began to leap and walk!
11 When the populace saw what Paul had done, they cried out in their native tongue: *The gods have taken the form of men [and come down to visit us]!*
12 They decided Barnabas was Jupiter [Zeus], and Paul was Mercury [Hermes], because he did most of the speaking.
13 The priest of Jupiter, from the temple outside the city, even brought oxen laden with garlands to the city gates, and made ready to sacrifice them to the pair with the people.
14 When the two apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard about this, they rent their clothes and ran to the scene, crying out:
15 Sirs--why are you doing this? We are men, no better than you are, and preach that you should *turn* from these false gods to the living God, who made the heavens, earth, the sea, and all that lives in them!
16 This God in times past looked the other way, allowing the peoples of the earth to walk in their own ways.
17 Even so, He still showed us His goodness and reality by sending rain and blessing our crops, giving us harvest seasons, and letting our hearts rejoice with food and joy.
18 But despite their words, the two were barely able to keep the people from sacrificing to them.
19 Meanwhile, certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium came to stir up trouble, rousing the people, who stoned Paul and threw him out of the city, thinking him dead.
20 But as the disciples encircled him, he got to
his feet and returned to the city. The next day, he left with Barnabas for Derby.
21 After preaching the Gospel there and teaching many, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch,
22 Strengthening the hearts of the disciples, and encouraging them to continue in the faith, saying: We shall only enter the Kingdom of God through much tribulation!
23 And when they ordained elders in every congregation, and prayed and fasted, they commended them into the hands of the Lord, upon whom they had believed.
24 And after they had journeyed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia.
25 After they had preached the Message in Perga, they went down into the port of Attalia.
26 From there, they sailed to Antioch, the place from where they had been entrusted to the grace of God to do the work they had now completed.
27 When they arrived and the church was gathered together, they reported all that God had done through them, and how He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.
28 And there they [recuperated and] stayed for a long time with the disciples.

ACTS CHAPTER 15

1 Meanwhile, certain men came down from Judea, and taught the Gentile brethren: Unless you receive physical circumcision, as taught by Moses, you cannot be saved!
2 When Paul and Barnabas wound up in a heated argument with them on this issue, the church decided that Paul and Barnabas, along with some of those on the other side, should go to Jerusalem and ask the apostles and elders about this question.
3 And having been sent out by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, relating how the Gentiles had been converted to the
faith--and their report brought great joy to all the brethren.
4 When they finally made it to Jerusalem, the church, including the apostles and elders, received them, and the group related all that God had been doing through them.
5 But then rose up the [Shammaiite] Pharisees who had come into the faith [and caused this problem], saying that it was necessary for the Gentiles to become full converts to Judaism, becoming circumcised and keeping the Law of Moses [as they did].
6 So the apostles and elders met together to consider this issue.
7 After some heated debate, Peter stood up, and said: Men and brothers--you know that a long time back, God made a choice that I should be the one from whom the Gentiles would first hear the teaching of the Gospel, and turn to it in faith.
8 And God, who knows the heart, showed His approval of them by giving them the Holy Spirit just as He did to us,
9 And made no distinction between them and us, purifying their hearts by faith.

10 Now therefore, why challenge God by going one better than Him by putting the yoke of [keeping the written Law--with the oral Law that accompanies it--] on the Gentile disciples, which neither we, nor our fathers, were ever able to bear?
11 We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ [--and not by keeping the Law, nor by adding the Law to that grace--] that they and we shall both be saved!
12 Then everyone was silent, and listened to Paul and Barnabas, who declared the many miracles and wonders God had performed amongst the Gentiles through them.
13 After the two finished speaking, James spoke up, saying: Men and brethren, listen to me.
14 Simeon has related how God, at the beginning, made a visitation to the Gentiles to select out of them a people for Himself, to bring honor to His name.
15 The prophets foretold this, and wrote:
16 **After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up:**
17 **That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.**
18 From the beginning of time, God knew what He was going to do.
19 Thus, my ruling is that we not trouble those among the Gentiles who have turned to God,
20 But that we write to them, instructing them to abstain from idolatry, from fornication, from [meat that has not had the blood drained from it], and from committing murder,
21 For, from days of old, Moses has been preached by people in the synagogues of every city each Sabbath when they read the Scriptures [so the Gentiles are probably familiar with these precepts already].
21 [*Alternate reading*]: [As for those brought up in Judaism, we need not write anything to *them*,] for Moses has been preached in the synagogues of every city each Sabbath when they read the Scriptures [so they know the right things to do anyway].
22 Then it pleased the apostles and elders, and the church as a whole, to send some representatives with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch to deliver the message. So they sent Judas, surnamed bar Sabbas, and Silas, two chief elders in the community.
23 And they wrote and sent letters with them, which said:
The apostles, elders, and your brothers send greetings to our Gentile brothers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia.
24 *Since we have heard that some from our community have gone out from us, and said some things that troubled you [--namely, that you must become circumcised, and start keeping the Law of Moses--] we want you to know that they were not acting with our approval, and we gave no such order.*
25 *And having assembled and come to unanimous agreement on this issue, we have sent some representatives with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,*
26 *Two men who have not hesitated to risk their lives in proclaiming the Lord Jesus Christ.*
27 *Thus, Judas and Silas will confirm what we have said, and reiterate it to you personally.*
28 *For it seemed good to both the Holy Spirit and us, to lay no greater burden on you than these necessary things:*
29 *That you must not participate in ceremonies in which meat is sacrificed to idols.*
That you must not commit murder [for vengeance or any other reason].
That you must not eat meat from an animal that has been strangled, rather than having its blood drained from it first.
And that you must avoid sexual sin.
If you observe these things, you will be doing just fine. Farewell!
30 So when they were dismissed, they went to Antioch, and when they had gathered the host of believers together they read the letter.
31 When they read the letter, everyone rejoiced [and was very relieved].
32 And Judas and Silas, being prophets
themselves, encouraged the brethren with many words, and strengthened them.
33 After they had been there for a time, they returned to the apostles with the blessings of the brethren there.
34 However, Silas decided to stay for a while.
35 Paul and Barnabas also stayed in Antioch with many others, preaching the Message of the Lord.
36 But eventually Paul said to Barnabas: Let's return, and visit the brothers in every city where we preached the Message of the Lord, and see how they're doing.
37 Barnabas agreed, but wished to take John
Mark with them.
38 But Paul would not even consider taking the one who had left them in Pamphylia instead of continuing on with them to the work.
39 And the dispute grew so heated [with neither man budging], that they broke their joint ministry, and Barnabas sailed off to Cypress with Mark.
40 Paul then chose Silas, and left after being commended to God's grace by the brothers in the church.
41 So they went throughout Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

ACTS CHAPTER 16

1 In time, they came to Derbe and Lystra, where they encountered a young disciple by name of Timothy. He was the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer. His father, however, was a Greek.
2 Timothy had a very good reputation amongst the brethren in Lystra and Iconium.
3 Paul desired that Timothy would go with him and Silas on their missionary journeys, and so he performed a circumcision ceremony upon him because the Jews thereabouts knew he was only half-Jewish, with a Greek father [which caused a natural prejudice against him in some people's minds].
4 As the trio passed through the various cities, they proclaimed the decrees to be kept that had been passed by the apostles and elders back in Jerusalem.
5 And so the churches were firmly established in the faith, with new members joining daily.
6 They passed through Phrygia and part of Galatia, because the Holy Spirit forbade them to preach the Gospel in [northwest] Turkey.
7 After they came to Mysia, they sought to enter Bithynia [--northern Turkey--] but the Spirit didn't want them to go there either.
8 So they passed by Mysia and went on to Troas [in western Turkey]
9 There, Paul had a vision one night, seeing a Macedonian man begging him to: "Come over to Macedonia, and help us!"
10 [It was here in Troas that I, Luke, joined them,] and after Paul had seen the vision, we immediately sought to journey into Macedonia [--northern Greece--] confident that the Lord had called us to preach the Gospel there.
11 Thus, we sailed straight out from Troas to Samothracia, and the next day we headed to Neapolis.
12 From there, we went to Philippi, a Roman colony and the main city of that part of Macedonia, where we stayed for a number of days.
13 And during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, we left the city and went out to a river, supposing we might find some Jews praying

there, and we sat down and talked with some godly women who met there.
14 There was a woman named Lydia, a dealer of purple dye from the city of Thyatira who worshipped God. The Lord opened her heart to the Gospel, and she accepted the things spoken by Paul.
15 When she and her household were baptized, she entreated us, saying: If you believe me faithful to the Lord, come stay at my house! She would not take *no* for an answer [so we did].
16 Now one day as we headed to prayer, a woman who had control of a demon spirit of divination encountered us. She was well known in town, and had brought her masters a lot of money through her fortune-telling.
17 She began following Paul and us, crying out: These men are servants of the Most High God, who are here to show us the way of salvation!
18 She did this for days and days. Finally, Paul--having had enough of her--turned to her, and said to the demon: I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her! And it did, right then and there!
19 When the woman's owners saw that their hopes of future profit were now gone, they caught and dragged Paul and Silas to where the local rulers were gathered in the public marketplace.
20 They forced them before the magistrates, saying: These men--being Jews--are stirring up all sorts of trouble in this city!
21 They're trying to proselytize, and indoctrinate us into [religious customs that aren't a part of any of the state-sanctioned religions, so we Romans cannot observe them]!
22 So the crowds rose up against them, and the magistrates rent their clothes, giving orders that the two should be beaten.
23 And when they had beaten them severely, they cast them into a dungeon with orders for the jailer to watch over them.
24 Having received his orders, the jailer put them in the most secure area of the prison, and bound their feet in stocks.
25 Now at midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing praises to God, and the other prisoners heard them.
26 And suddenly a great earthquake hit the town, and the prison foundation was shaken. The doors were forced off their hinges and the prisoners freed from their bonds from the strength of the earthquake.
27 The jailer awakened and saw the prison doors open, so he assumed the prisoners had fled. Then he drew his sword to commit suicide [in hope of sparing his family].
28 But Paul shouted out: Don't harm yourself--we're all here!
29 Then the jailer called for a torch, and ran to investigate. Shaking in fear [--thinking they may have somehow been responsible for the earthquake--] he fell down before Paul and Silas,
30 And then brought them out of the cell, saying: Sirs--what must I do to be saved?
31 They told him: Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you and your entire household will be saved!
32 And they proclaimed the Message of the Lord to him and his household [who lived at or near the jail].
33 That same hour of the night, the jailer washed and cleaned their wounds. Then he and his household were immediately baptized.
34 When he later brought them into his quarters, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with his entire household.
35 The next morning, the magistrates [--fearing the two might have brought bad luck to the town--] sent officers telling the jailer: Let them go!36 And the jailer told Paul: The magistrates have said to let you go, so depart in peace!
37 But Paul said to the men: They have beaten us--Roman citizens--in public, with no trial, and thrown us in jail, and they expect us to sneak out of town?! You tell them to come escort us out publicly!
38 So the officers went, and told the magistrates this. Then the magistrates were afraid when they heard that Paul and Silas were both Roman citizens [for it was a death penalty offense to beat them without trial].
39 And so they came themselves [in humility], and escorted them out. Then they politely requested that they leave the city.
40 So the two left the prison and visited Lydia's house. And after speaking encouragement to the brethren, they left.

ACTS CHAPTER 17

1 After passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica where there was a Jewish synagogue.
2 And as Paul's habit was, he went there and preached for three Sabbath days, reasoning with the Jews from the Scriptures,
3 Expounding on the concept that the Messiah would have to suffer and then rise from the dead, concluding: "And this Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, *is* the Messiah!"
4 And some believed, and joined themselves to Paul and Silas. These included many devout Greek proselytes and "God-fearers," and quite a few important women as well.
5 But the unbelieving Jews, jealous, gathered some thuggish people into a group and stirred up the city, breaking into the house of Jason in hope of dragging Paul and his associates out to mob justice.
6 But when they found Paul and his company gone, they hauled off Jason and some other brethren to the city magistrates, shouting: These men are part of the group who have been turning the world upside down, and now they're here in Thessalonica,
7 And Jason has been giving them shelter! All of them preach against the decrees of Caesar, saying the real king of the earth is someone named Jesus!
8 The magistrates and citizens of the city were greatly worried when they heard the crowd make these accusations.
9 So when they had assessed a fine to Jason and the rest, they let them go [with a stern warning].
10 The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away to Berea by night. There, they went straight to the local Jewish synagogue.
11 Now the Jews here were more honorable than the Jews of Thessalonica, for they received the Gospel message with open-minded joy, and searched the Scriptures daily to verify whether what they had been told was so.
12 Therefore, many Jews believed, including a large number of influential Greek men and women.
13 But when the Jews of Thessalonica heard that Paul was preaching the Message of God at Berea, they came there and stirred up the people.
14 And immediately the brethren sent Paul off in a ship, but Silas and Timothy remained behind.
15 Those who took Paul away sailed to Athens, then they returned home with Paul's order for Silas and Timothy to return as quickly as possible.
16 Now while Paul waited in Athens, his spirit was stirred up when he saw how the whole city was bound by idolatry,
17 And so he argued the faith in the synagogue with the Jews and the "God-fearers"; and also daily in the marketplace with anyone who was willing to debate him.
18 Then some of the intelligentsia of the city--Epicurean and Stoic philosophers--took notice of him. Some said: What is this beggar talking about? Others supposed: He seems to be proclaiming a religion dealing with new gods. They thought this because Paul was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.
19 So they took and escorted him up to the *Areopagus*--the public debate forum at Mars' Hill--and asked: Would you explain what this new doctrine you're speaking about pertains to?

20 For you are relating things we have never heard before, and we would like to understand what you mean.
21 You see, Theophilus, the Athenians, and those who visit there, spend their time either telling or listening to the most current news and thoughts.
22 So Paul stood in the midst of Mars' Hill, and said: You men of Athens--I see that you are way too superstitious!
23 For as I passed by the various shrines of the city, I found a shrine with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Well, it is this God, whom you worship without knowing anything about, that I have come to speak of.
24 This is the God who made the earth, and all that dwells in it. And since He is Lord of heaven and earth, He does not live in man-made temples.
25 Neither does He need men to provide for His needs through their sacrifices, seeing that it is He who gives life, breath, and everything else to men in the first place,
26 And was the One who created all men through a single progenitor at the beginning, and determined when and where each empire of men should rise, fall, and dwell in the meantime.
27 It was His intent that they would seek after Him, and by groping their way to Him, they would find Him--though He is never far from any of us.
28 For through His will, we live, move, and breathe, as even your own monotheistic poet Aratus noted when he said, *For we are also his offspring*.
29 So, since we are the offspring of one single, unfathomable God like this, we should not bring Him down to our level by trying to fashion profane images of Him made of gold, silver, or stone.
30 God tolerated that ignorant practice in times past, but now He demands all men everywhere repent,
31 For He has appointed a day [of judgment] in which He will righteously judge the world through the one agent He ordained to do this, whom I speak of. And God has shown proof of that to all men by resurrecting that man from the dead!
32 When they heard Paul speak of rising from the dead, some laughed. But others said: We'd like to hear from you again about this.
33 So Paul left the crowd on Mars' Hill.
34 Even so, a few men followed him and believed, among whom was Dionysius, a senator of the Areopagus, and a woman named Damaris, along with some others.

ACTS CHAPTER 18

1 After his experiences in Athens, Paul left for Corinth,
2 Where he met a Jewish man named Aquila who had been born in Pontus. Aquila had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla after Claudius Caesar [in 49 AD] had expelled the Jews from Rome [because of fights between Christian and non-Christian Jews there].
3 Since Paul was a tent-maker by trade, as were Aquila and Priscilla, he lodged [and worked] with them.
4 And Paul spoke every Sabbath, persuading Jews and Greeks about the Gospel.
5 When Silas and Timothy caught up with him from Macedonia, Paul was burdened in his spirit, and began preaching full time, proclaiming to the Jews that Jesus was Messiah.
6 But when the Jews rose up in opposition and denounced his message, Paul shook the dust from his robe at them, saying: Your blood be on your own heads--I am innocent of it! From now on, I will take the Message only to the Gentiles!
7 And he left the synagogue, and went to stay next door at the house of Justus, a man who worshipped God.
8 But Crispus, the president of the synagogue, and his household, believed the Message, and received baptism along with many other Corinthians who heard and believed, too.
9 Then the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision one night, saying: Don't be afraid! Don't hold back--but preach everything you've been told to say!
10 For I am with you, and will allow no man to assault and harm you, for I have many people in this city [and they need you].
11 So Paul stayed there for a year-and-a-half, teaching the Message of God among the people.
12 Now [in 52 AD] when Gallio was made Proconsul of Achaia, the [unbelieving] Jews rose up, *en masse*, against Paul, and brought him to Gallio's court.
13 They said: This man convinces men in our community to worship God in a manner that conflicts with our Torah!
14 But before Paul even got a chance to open his mouth, Gallio replied: [You bother me with *this*?!] If this were some great matter of *Roman* law being broken in your community, I would hear the case!
15 But if it's a question of your *religious* Law--its teachings, and who deserves to hold what title--don't waste my time with it! You deal with religious matters yourselves! [Get these Jews out of my sight!]
16 So he had them driven out from his judgment seat.
17 Then the crowd [--afraid that the Proconsul had now marked the Jews as troublemakers--] took Sosthenes, the new president of the synagogue, and beat him in the town square before the judgment seat as Gallio watched, totally refusing to intervene.
18 After this, Paul stayed in Corinth for quite a while, then took leave of the brethren and sailed to Syria along with Aquila and Priscilla. Earlier at Cenchrea, it should be noted, he had shaved his head after taking a [Nazirite] vow.
19 They wound up in Ephesus, where he left the two, but Paul himself went into the synagogue to reason with the Jews.
20 When the Jews there asked him to remain, he had to decline,
21 And instead bade them farewell with these words: I must absolutely keep the upcoming Feast in Jerusalem, but I will return if God permits! So he sailed from Ephesus.
22 After landing in Caesarea and staying long enough to greet the church there, he continued to Antioch.
23 After spending some time there, he left and visited the regions throughout Galatia and Phrygia in that order, strengthening all the disciples.
24 Now there was a certain Jewish [proselyte] named Apollos who had come to Ephesus. He was a native of Alexandria with a gift for speaking, and he had a vast knowledge of the Scriptures.
25 He had been given instruction in the doctrines of the Lord, and being a zealous man he spoke fervently about the Lord and His doctrines [of repentance], but only from the perspective of John the Baptist.
26 When Priscilla and Aquila heard him speak boldly in the synagogue, they met up with him, and explained [the fullness found in Christ of what John had been proclaiming before his appearance].
27 When Apollos decided to go into Achaia, the brethren in the church gave him a letter of introduction, encouraging the believers there to receive him. After arriving, he was a great help to all those who, through God's grace, had seen the light, and believed.
28 By his bold public speaking and knowledge of Scripture, he articulately managed to convince many Jews there that Jesus was the Messiah.

ACTS CHAPTER 19

1 And it came to pass, that while Apollos was ministering at Corinth, Paul, having traveled overland, arrived at Ephesus, and finding some disciples there,
2 Asked them: Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? And the men replied: We did not know that there *was* a Holy Spirit *for* us to receive!
3 So Paul asked: Then in whose name were you baptized? They said: We have received John's baptism.
4 Paul then told them: John instituted a baptism of repentance, but he made it clear to the people that they should believe on the one coming after him, who was Jesus the Messiah.
5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.
6 And after Paul laid hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in Tongues, and prophesied.
7 There were about twelve men involved in this incident.
8 Paul then went into the synagogue there and for three months boldly argued and proclaimed the things concerning the Kingdom of God.
9 But when some of them were hardened in their hearts against his message and rejected it, they went on to denounce "the Way" to the community. So Paul left the synagogue, taking those who believed with him, and they continued to meet and debate in the lecture hall of Tyrannus [daily from 11 AM to 4 PM].
10 He continued at this for two years, so everyone in that part of Turkey, Jew and Gentile, heard the teachings about the Lord Jesus.
11 And God performed some unique miracles at Paul's hands,
12 So that even scraps of cloth or articles of clothing that had made contact with him were taken to the sick and laid upon them, and they were healed of diseases, and evil spirits came out of them.
13 About this time, some itinerant Jewish exorcists took notice of Paul's effectiveness against demons, and decided to incorporate the name of Jesus in their exorcism ceremonies. So they found some demon-possessed people, and began saying: "We command you in the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches!"
14 Now there were seven sons of a chief mystic named Sceva who were doing this [and one day they tried it on a particularly powerful demon].
15 But the man who was possessed by the demon simply turned to them, and said: Jesus I know personally, and Paul I've heard of--but just *who...are...you*?!
16 Then the demon-possessed man leapt up and beat the lot of them so badly that they fled naked and bruised from the house.
17 Word of this incident spread to all the Jews and Gentiles dwelling in Ephesus, and a great fear came upon them; and the name of the Lord Jesus was greatly esteemed because of it.
18 And many, as a result of this, became believers, and admitted their sins and the sorts of lives they had been living.
19 Many others who believed, former practitioners of occult arts, brought their books dealing with the supernatural and fortune-telling, and burned them publicly. These manuscripts were near priceless, and were tallied as having a value of fifty thousand pieces of silver!
20 So the doctrine of God spread everywhere [prevailing over all opposition].
21 After the success of his ministry there, Paul eventually decided--after passing through Macedonia and Achaia--to return to Jerusalem, saying: After I go there, I must also go on to Rome.
22 So he sent Timothy and Erastus, his two assistants, before him into Macedonia, but he remained in Turkey for a while longer.
23 About this same time, a big disturbance arose concerning "the Way."
24 For a silversmith named Demetrius, who had a business making silver idols of the goddess Diana [Artemis], who made a lot of money for him and his fellows,
25 Called together his fellow guild members, and said: Men, you know that making idols is what has made us prosperous.
26 In addition, you see that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of this part of Turkey, this man Paul has convinced many people that idols made with human hands are not real gods, and turned them away from idol-worship!
27 Because of him, not only is our livelihood threatened, but the great temple of Diana--whom Turkey and all the world worships--is itself at risk of losing all relevance and influence, causing her magnificence to be treated with scorn!
28 When they heard this, the men were whipped into frenzy, and began to shout: Great is Diana of the Ephesians!
29 The whole city was filled with confusion, and having caught two Macedonian companions of Paul, Gaius and Aristarchus, they rushed in a mob to the amphitheater.
30 And though Paul would have tried to enter in and reason with the crowd, the disciples restrained him for his own good.
31 Now certain key people in Turkey, friends of Paul's, sent word to him to not go into the amphitheater under any circumstances.
32 Meanwhile, some were shouting one thing, and others another, and the whole place was in confusion with most not even knowing why they were there.
33 Eventually the Jews thrust Alexander out of their midst to try to calm things down, and he gestured with his hands for the crowd to quiet down so he could make a defense.
34 But when everyone saw that he was a Jew, for almost two hours they cried out: Great is Diana of the Ephesians!
35 When finally an official of the city calmed the people down, he said: You men of Ephesus--who doesn't know that this city is dedicated to Diana, whose image [in the form of a meteorite] was sent down to earth from Jupiter [Zeus]?
36 Seeing as no one can deny this, you should calm down, and not take action into your own hands.
37 For you have brought these men here, who technically have committed no crime. They have not robbed temples, nor have they blasphemed your goddess.
38 So if Demetrius or any of his allied craftsmen with him have a legitimate charge to lay against them, the court is open and the magistrates are there. Let both sides present their case!
39 And if you have other matters to bring up--then do so in a lawful assembly.
40 Otherwise, word may get back to Caesar about this uproar, and Rome may turn its attention to us--and we'll have no answer to give!
41 After saying this, he dismissed the mob, and told them to go home.

ACTS CHAPTER 20

1 After the crowd died down, Paul summoned the disciples to him and embraced them in farewell. Then he departed for Macedonia.
2 After going through the province and exhorting the churches with many words, he continued on into Greece.
3 He was there for three months, but when the [unbelieving] Jews set a trap for him as he was about to sail to Syria, he decided to go overland by way of Macedonia.
4 The following people accompanied him into Turkey: Sopater of Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus of Thessalonica, Gaius of Derbe, Timothy; and Tychicus and Trophimus, both of whom were from Turkey.
5 These went before us, and waited for us to catch up at Troas.

6 In April, we sailed away from Philippi after the season of Unleavened Bread, arriving to meet them in Troas after five days. Then we remained there for a week.
7 On Sunday, when the disciples met together to [take Communion] Paul--who was leaving the next morning--preached until midnight to them.
8 And many menorahs were lit in the upper chamber where everyone was gathered together.
9 A young man named Eutychus was sitting on the windowsill nodding off, for Paul was being especially long-winded that night. As he drifted off, he fell out the window from the third story of the building, and was picked up dead.
10 Paul rushed down and fell upon the boy, embracing him. He said: Don't worry--he's not dead; his life is in him!
11 Paul went back upstairs [and took Communion]. Then he continued speaking until dawn, when he departed.
12 And the young Eutychus was sent home alive, and everyone was very relieved.
13 Meanwhile, we got on the ship again and sailed to Assos [on the island of Lesbos], intending to meet Paul, who told us to do so while he traveled across the island on foot.
14 When Paul rejoined us at Assos, we headed for Mitylene.
15-16 After sailing there, the next day we were opposite Chios, and the following day reached Samos, landing and staying at Trogyllium. The next day, we arrived at Miletus, bypassing Ephesus because Paul had decided to sail on instead of visiting, for he did not want to spend any more time in western Turkey. He was determined to reach Jerusalem by Pentecost if possible.
17 From Miletus he sent word to Ephesus, calling the elders of the church to him.
18 When they arrived, he told them: You know from the first day that I arrived in Turkey what sort of man I was the whole time I was here.
19 I served the Lord in all humility through many tears and temptations on the part of those Jews who plotted to destroy me.
20 You know that I showed and taught you every useful thing I could, holding nothing back as I preached in public, and at the church gatherings in the various houses.
21 I testified both to Jews and Gentiles the message of, "Repentance in God's sight, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."
22 I am now resolved in my spirit to go on to Jerusalem with no idea what awaits me there.
23 All I know is that the Holy Spirit speaks prophetically through people in every city I visit, warning me that chains and afflictions are waiting for me.
24 But these things will not intimidate me! Neither will I back off to protect my own life! I will finish my course with joy, completing the mission the Lord Jesus sent me on: testifying to all about the Gospel of the grace of God!
25 Look now--I sense that all of you, to whom I preached the Message of the Messianic Kingdom, will never see me again.
26 So I call you to witness this day that I declare myself innocent of any man's blood.
27 For I have not held back proclaiming all that God wanted me to tell you.
28 Keep careful watch then, you overseers of the flock the Holy Spirit has given you. Feed the church of God that Christ purchased with his own blood!
29 For I know that after I am gone, Satan will send wild wolves amongst your flock, not sparing any of the lambs.
30 Even from among your own group shall men arise and teach heresy, seeking to draw disciples to themselves.
31 Therefore, watch carefully, and remember that for three years I tearfully warned you about this, day and night.
32 Now, brothers, I leave you in God's hands with the Message of His grace, which will build you up and provide you an inheritance with all those who are set apart as His people.
33 Remember, *I* never sought for any man's money or clothing!
34 In fact, you know that I worked personally to earn the money to cover the needs of myself and those with me.
35 I did things like this as an example to you, so that you could see in every way how--by honest, hard work--you should support the weak, and remember the teaching of the Lord Jesus that it is more blessed to give than to receive.
36 When Paul had finished saying these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.
37 And they all wept and embraced Paul, kissing him,
38 Grieved above all at his statement that they would never see him again. Then they walked him down to the ship.

ACTS CHAPTER 21

1 And it came to pass after we tore ourselves away from them, that we sailed off on a straight course to Coos, and the next day we reached the island of Rhodes. From there, we disembarked at Patara.
2 Finding a ship sailing for [Phonecia on the cost of Lebanon], we boarded and set forth.
3 When we reached the isle of Cypress, we passed it on our left side and sailed on to Syria, departing at Tyre, where the ship was going to offload its cargo.
4 Finding some disciples there, we fellowshipped with them for a week, and some by the Spirit repeatedly spoke prophetically to Paul that he should not go up to Jerusalem.
5 When our visit was over, everyone--including the wives and children of the men--walked with us out of the city to the seashore. Then we knelt down, and prayed.
6. When we bid each other farewell, we boarded our ship, and they went back to their homes.
7 Finishing the voyage from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, where we greeted the brethren, visiting for a day.
8 The next day, those of us in Paul's company left for Caesarea, and we entered the house of Philip the evangelist. He was one of "The Seven," and we stayed with him.
9 This Philip had four unmarried daughters who prophesied.
10 We stayed there for many days, and finally a prophet named Agabus came from Judea.
11 When he arrived, he took Paul's belt and tied up his own hands and feet, saying: Thus says the Holy Spirit--so shall the Jews at Jerusalem tie up the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles!
12 When we heard this, both we and those from there urged Paul not to go up to Jerusalem.
13 But Paul answered: Why are you crying, and trying to break my heart? I am prepared not only to be bound, but to die in Jerusalem as an ambassador of the Lord Jesus!
14 And when Paul could not be persuaded to change his mind, we gave up, saying: The Lord's will be done.
15 After those days, we gathered our baggage and went up to Jerusalem.
16 Along with us went some disciples from Caesarea, who brought with them Mnason of Cypress, an early disciple, whose house we would stay at.
17 When we reached Jerusalem, the brethren there greeted us gladly.
18 The next day, Paul and we went in to see James. The church elders of Jerusalem were there as well.

19 When Paul had greeted them, he related what wonderful things God had been doing among the Gentiles through his ministry.
20 When they heard it, they glorified the Lord. Then they said: You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews here in Jerusalem are believers--and all of *them* are zealous for the Torah.
21 But a false rumor has circulated about you, claiming you've been telling the Jews living with the Gentiles abroad that they should abandon their Torah observance, and cease circumcising their children and keeping Jewish traditions.
22 [Now we know that this is untrue, but you've never been popular with many people here, so] what can we do? Eventually, everyone will know you're here [and trouble may follow].
23 So we have an idea, and suggest you do this: We have four men here who are under [Nazirite] vows.
24 Take them, and sanctify yourself with them, and cover the costs for their ritual sacrifices. Shave your head along with them, and then everyone will know that the rumors they've heard about you are untrue, and that you are still a Torah observant Jew.
25 Now as concerns the Gentile believers, we've already written and concluded that they are not required to convert to full Judaism themselves, but they must only keep from participating in rituals involving sacrifices to other gods, from murder, from meat with the blood in it, and from sexual sin.
26 So Paul agreed and joined the men, the next day sanctifying himself with them, and going into the Temple to give notice as to when the ritual sacrifices [for the Nazirite vow] should be made to complete their purification.
27 When the seven days of this were almost over, some Jews from Turkey recognized Paul in the Temple courts, then stirred up the people and laid hands on him,
28 Shouting out: Men of Israel, help! This is the heretic who denounces observant Jews everywhere, and tries to convince people to forsake the Torah and the Place! He's also the one who brought [uncircumcised] Greeks into the Temple, and profaned the Holy Place!
29 They said this because they had earlier seen him in the city accompanied by Trophimus, who was from Ephesus. So they assumed Paul had brought him into the Temple.
30 And all the city was stirred [fearing the wrath of God upon the nation for such a defilement of the Temple], and they threw Paul out of the Temple courts and shut the gates behind him.
31 Now as they went about to kill Paul, word reached the chief officer of the Roman garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar.
32 The man immediately took some centurions and their squads, and ran for the Temple [next to their fortress]. When the mob saw the chief officer and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.
33 Then the commanding officer came up and took him, ordering him to be bound [hand and foot] with two chains. After that, he demanded to know who he was and what he had done.
34 The crowd spoke all at once, with some saying one thing, and others another; and when he could not figure out the problem from the commotion, the officer commanded Paul to be taken next door to the Fortress Antonia.
35 When they reached the stairs, the soldiers actually had to carry Paul upon their shoulders, for the crowds were whipped into a fever pitch, ready to kill.
36 The crowd, meanwhile, followed after, mobbing them and crying out: Away with him!
37 As Paul was about to be led into the fortress, he shouted to the officer in Greek, saying: *May I speak to you?* Surprised, the officer replied: *You can speak Greek?!*
38 *Are you that fellow they called "the Egyptian," who caused a revolt among the people, and led four thousand murdering insurrectionists out in the desert?!*
39 But Paul said: *No--I am a Jew and citizen of Tarsus, an important and well-known city of Cilicia. I beg you--let me speak to the people [and calm them down]!*
40 When he agreed, Paul stood upon the stairs and gestured for the people to be silent. When they calmed down, he spoke to them in classical Hebrew.

ACTS CHAPTER 22

1 *Men, brethren, and elders of Israel, hear the defense I would now make for myself!*
2 Now when they heard him speaking in the true Hebrew tongue, they quieted down all the more. So he went on.
3 *I am truly a Jewish man born in Tarsus, a city of Cilicia, yet brought up here in Jerusalem as one of the pupils of Gamaliel [in the* yeshiva *of Hillel]. I was taught all our rich traditions of how to keep the Torah, and was zealous before God, as you all are today.*
4 *And I persecuted the followers of "the Way," even to death, binding and casting into dungeons both men and women,*
5 *As the High Priest will agree, along with all the members of the [city] Sanhedrin, from whom I received letters to the brethren appointing me an Inquisitor, and authorizing me to capture all the Christians in Damascus, and bring them back in chains to Jerusalem for punishment.*
6 *Now as I was traveling there and neared Damascus around noon, suddenly a great light from heaven shone round about me.*
7 *And I fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to me: "Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?"*
8 *And I answered the voice, "Who are you, Sir?" And he said back, "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting!"*
9 *Now my traveling companions indeed saw the light, and were afraid, but they didn't understand the voice of him who spoke to me.*
10 *And I asked: "What shall I do, Lord?" And the Lord said to me, "Arise, and go into Damascus; and there you will be told of all the things you are appointed to do."*
11 *I was blinded by the glorious light I saw, and had to be led by the hand into Damascus by those accompanying me.*
12 *Now in Damascus lived a devout man, fully observant in the Torah, named Ananias. He had a good reputation among all the Jews in the city,*
13 *And he came to me. Then, standing before me, he said, "Brother Saul, receive your sight!" And right then, I could see, and looked upon him.*
14 *And Ananias told me, "The God of our ancestors has chosen to reveal His will to you, and that you should see the Just One, and hear him speak to you.*
15 *"For you will testify to all men about what you have seen and heard.*
16 *"So why wait? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling upon the Name of the Lord*."
17 *Now later, when I was praying at the Temple here in Jerusalem, I fell into a trance.*
18 *And I had a vision of Jesus appearing to me, and saying: "Hurry! Get out of Jerusalem now, for they will not accept the testimony you have about me."*
19 *And I said, "Lord, they all know how I imprisoned and beat, in every synagogue, those who believe in you.*
20 *"And when the blood of your witness Stephen was shed, I was standing by, and cast my vote for his death. I even watched the clothing of those who stoned him!"*
21 *But he said, "Go! For I will send you far away, to the Gentiles."*

22 Now the crowd [--many of whom were ardent followers of the teachings and traditions of Shammai--] listened intently up until the point they heard the word "Gentiles." Then they exploded in rage, saying: May the earth be rid of this man! He does not deserve to live!
23 And they shouted, cast off their cloaks, and threw dust in the air [to show their outrage and rejection of the message they heard].
24 The commanding officer then ordered that Paul be brought into the fortress and interrogated with the lash to find out why the crowd had just exploded.
25 But as they stretched him out with leather thongs [between two whipping posts], Paul spoke to the centurion who stood by, asking: Is it in keeping with the law of Caesar to whip a Roman citizen who has had neither trial nor conviction?
26 When the centurion heard that, he went, and told the commanding officer: Be careful what you do--this man is a *Civis Romanus*!
27 Then the man came to Paul, and asked: Is it true that you hold a rank of *Civis Romanus*? And Paul said: Yes!
28 The commanding officer then said: I paid a lot [--five hundred drachmas--] for that privilege and the freedoms that come with it! But Paul's response was: I was *born* a free Roman citizen!
29 Then those who were about to interrogate him stood back from Paul. The commanding officer was afraid as well, for he had ordered a Roman citizen to be bound [and mistreated] without trial.
30 The next day, because he still needed to know why the Jews were in such an uproar, he released Paul from his bonds, and ordered the chief Sadducee priests and their Sanhedrin to appear before him. Then he had Paul brought down and set before them.

ACTS CHAPTER 23

1 Then Paul, fixing his gaze upon the Sanhedrin, said: Men and brethren, I have lived with a clear conscience before God up to today--
2 That was as far as he got before the current High Priest, Ananias, commanded those standing by Paul to hit him on the mouth.
3 Then Paul told him: And God will smite *you*, you hypocrite! You dare sit to judge me, in accordance with the Torah, yet command me to be struck in contradiction to it?!
4 Those standing by Paul said: Do you curse God's High Priest?!
5 Immediately Paul responded: Brothers, I did not know he was the current High Priest, for it is written: **Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.**
6 But when Paul noted that part of the assembly were Sadducees, and another part Pharisees, he cried out: Men and brethren, I was--and continue to be--a Pharisee, taught everything I know *by* Pharisees. I am being persecuted simply because I refuse to deny the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead [which these *Sadducees* will go to any lengths to silence]!
7 When he said this, the animosities between both groups manifested, and they began arguing with each other.
8 You see, the Sadducees say there is no resurrection, nor are there angels, nor does man have an immortal soul--but the Pharisees believe these things.
9 And a great cry arose, and the Pharisee Torah teachers rose up and grabbed Paul from one side, arguing with the Sadducees, and saying: We find no evil in this man. But if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not risk fighting against God!
10 The other side was just as angry, and when things got so hot that the commanding officer thought Paul would be pulled in half like a wishbone by both groups, he ordered some troops to forcibly remove him from the crowd and escort him to the safety of the fortress.
11 That night, the Lord appeared next to Paul, and said: Cheer up, Paul! For as you have testified of me here in Jerusalem, you must also testify of me in Rome.
12 Now when day came some Judeans banded together and bound themselves under a curse if they touched food or drink before they had killed Paul.
13 Over forty men were involved in this plot.
14 So they came to the chief priests and elders, telling them: We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will not eat or drink until Paul lies dead at our hands!
15 So do this: Have the Sanhedrin send word to the chief Roman officer to bring Paul here tomorrow for some questioning. We'll see to it he never makes it here alive!
16 Word of this plot reached the son of Paul's sister, and he rushed to the fortress to let Paul know.
16 [*Alternate reading*]: The son of Paul's sister happened to overhear word of this plot, and he rushed to the fortress to let Paul know.
17 Paul then called a centurion over to him, saying: Bring this young man to your commander--he has something he needs to tell him.
18 So the centurion took him to his commander, and reported: Paul the prisoner summoned me, and said to bring this young man to you because he has something to tell you.
19 Then the commander took the boy by the hand and led him out of earshot, asking: What is it you have to tell me?
20 The nephew replied: The Judeans have agreed to send word to you to bring Paul to the Sanhedrin tomorrow under a pretext of questioning him.
21 But don't do it! For a band of over forty men will be lying in wait to ambush him, and they've made a vow that they won't eat or drink until they've killed him. Their plans are ready even now, and they're only waiting for you to agree to bring Paul to them.
22 So the commanding officer let the young man go, telling him: Don't let anyone know you told me these things!
23 Then he summoned two centurions, and told them: Assemble two centuries of troops to march to Caesarea. I want seventy mounted troops, and two hundred spearmen to go as well. They will depart three hours after dusk!
24 Include horses for that man Paul as well, and get him to governor Felix safely!
25 After this, he sat down and wrote the following letter:
26 *Claudius Lysias sends greetings to the most excellent governor Felix.*
27 *The prisoner I send to you was rescued from the Judeans, who seized and wanted to kill him. Having understood he was a Roman citizen, I came with some troops, and rescued him.*
28 W*hen I sought to investigate the matter they had against him, I brought him to their local Sanhedrin.*
29 *I get the impression their problems with him are of a religious nature, and nothing against our law that renders him worthy of death or prison.*
30 *When word reached me that the Judeans had a band lying in wait to kill him, I sent him to you immediately, and informed his accusers that they should make any accusation against him in your presence. Farewell.*
31 Then the soldiers, as commanded, took Paul by night to Antipatris.
32 The next day, the foot soldiers returned to the fortress, leaving him in the care of the seventy mounted cavalry.
33 When they reached Caesarea, they handed Paul and the dispatch over to the governor.

34 After he had read the dispatch, the governor asked from what province Paul was from, and Paul answered: Cilicia [in southeast Turkey]. When he heard that, the governor said:
35 I will hear your case, then, when your accusers come here. And he commanded Paul to be kept in Herod's old judgment hall.

ACTS CHAPTER 24

1 After five days, the High Priest Ananias came down with [his Sanhedrin], and also brought along a skilled speaker named Tertullus, who made their case against Paul to the governor.
2 When Paul was summoned forth, Tertullus began his accusations against Paul by flattering the governor, saying: Since under your skilled rule we have had peace in the nation, and been blessed with many good reforms on your part,
3 We all, in every region, accept and appreciate your goodness to us, most noble Felix.
4 But so that I impose upon as little of your precious time as possible, I beg your patience to briefly state our concerns.
5 We have found this man to be a persistent plague! Everywhere he goes, he stirs up sedition amongst the Jews--and furthermore, he is one of the chief ringleaders of the sect of the Nazarenes!
6 He also came and profaned the Temple; and we took him, and would have judged him by our own laws.
7 But the chief officer Lysias came and, using extreme force, took him from us,
8 Commanding us, his accusers, to present our case to you, so you could make the determination of the facts regarding our accusations of him.
9 The Judeans present then mouthed their agreement with Tertullus' statement.
10 Finally the governor beckoned for Paul to speak. He replied: Since I know you have been in authority over the region for a number of years [and already have knowledge of some of the issues I will relate], I am relieved to be able to present my case to you.
11 So that you have a clear understanding of the background of all this, know that I arrived twelve days ago to come worship in Jerusalem.
12 And my accusers did not, at any time, find me arguing with anyone in the Temple, nor causing any disturbances amongst the people, in the synagogues, nor in the city itself.
13 Neither can they offer one iota of evidence for the accusations they have made against me.
14 But I do admit this to you: I am indeed a member of "the Way," which they dub a heretical movement, and--in accord with its precepts--I worship the God of my ancestors, believing all the things written in the Torah and our prophets,
15 Which give us confidence in God of an upcoming resurrection of the dead, when both just and unjust men shall live again, a doctrine that many of them affirm as well.
16 Because of this belief, I always strive to live with a clean conscience toward both God and man.
17 It has been many years since I have been in Jerusalem, and my purpose in coming was to bring alms to my people, and to make sacrificial offerings at the Temple.
18 But then some Jews from Turkey [--enemies of mine--] found me undergoing ritual purification in the Temple with certainly no crowd around me, nor arguing with anyone.
19 It's these men who, if there is any charge to be laid against me, ought to be here laying it out.
20 Otherwise, let these others point out any evidence of some specific crime on my part from when they interrogated me at their Sanhedrin--
21 Other than my proclamation to them that I'm being questioned about today that, "I am being persecuted simply because I refuse to deny the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead!"
22 When Felix heard this--because he already was familiar with the movement of "the Way"--he put off the accusers, saying: When Lysias, the commanding officer, comes down, I will have a more comprehensive understanding of these things concerning you.
23 So he assigned a centurion to watch Paul and keep him under limited house arrest, instructing him not to forbid any of Paul's acquaintances to aid or meet with his prisoner.
24 A while later, Felix--after his Jewish wife Drusilla had joined him--sent for Paul, and listened to his doctrines about the faith in Christ.
25 But as Paul touched on the subjects concerning righteousness, godly living, and the upcoming judgment of God, Felix was afraid and upset, telling him: Go your way for now--when I have more time, I will call for you again.
26 He also hoped that Paul might bribe him for his freedom, and this is why he would often send for Paul, and speak with him.
27 After a couple of years of this, Portius Festus took the seat of authority from Felix. And because Felix, on his way out of office, wished to depart on good terms with the Jewish leaders, he left Paul imprisoned.

ACTS CHAPTER 25

1 Now when Festus arrived in the province of Judea, he left Caesarea to go up to Jerusalem after three days.
2 There, the High Priest and the Jewish leaders brought up the issue of Paul, and they made a request:
3 The group wished Festus to summon Paul to Jerusalem--but they asked this in order to set up an ambush, and kill him.
4 Festus, however, replied that Paul must be kept at Caesarea, where he would shortly return to.
5 Let those leaders among you who can go, he told them, accompany me and make any charges there, to his face, if he is guilty of some wickedness.
6 Festus stayed in Jerusalem for over ten days before returning to Caesarea. The day afterward, he was ready to hear Paul's case, and took his place in the judgment seat. Then he commanded Paul to be brought forth.
7 When Paul arrived, the Jews who had come from Jerusalem surrounded the apostle, and lodged a list of serious accusations against him, none of which they could prove.
8 Paul, meanwhile, answered for himself, and said: Neither against the Jewish Torah, nor against the Temple, nor against the laws of Caesar am I guilty of any offense.
9 Festus, however, wanted to get in good with the Jewish leaders, so he said to Paul: Would you be willing to go with me to Jerusalem and have me hear and judge the case there?
10 Then Paul answered: I am standing right now before Caesar's judgment seat, where I *should* be judged! So far as the Judeans go, I have done no wrong as you very well know.
11 For if I am a criminal, or have committed any crime worthy of death, I am willing to die. But if I am innocent of these things my accusers say about me, no man should hand me over to them. I therefore [exert my rights as a Roman citizen, and] formally appeal to Caesar himself!
12 Then Festus, after conferring with his advisors, said: So you appeal to Caesar? Fine--to Caesar you will go!
13 Now some time after this, Herod Agrippa II [--who had taken the throne after Herod Antipas died in exile, and Agrippa I was struck dead by God--] visited Caesarea with his [notorious] sister Berenice, to pay their respects to Festus.

14 When they had been guests for a number of days, Festus made mention of Paul's case, saying: There is a certain man left under arrest by the former governor Felix.
15 The elders and chief priests in Jerusalem told me about him when I was there, and asked me to make a snap judgment against him.
16 But I told them, "We Romans do not simply hand men over to die before allowing them the opportunity to face their accusers, and give answer to the charges."
17 Therefore, when they made their way here, I immediately held court the next day, and commanded the man in question to be brought forth.
18 When he got here and the accusers started speaking, they offered no charges as I thought they would [--sedition, and the like].
19 Instead, this all seemed to be regarding some sort of local superstitions regarding a man named Jesus who was dead, but whom Paul swore was now alive.
20 And because I wasn't certain about what all this meant, I asked him if he would be willing to go to Jerusalem and be judged there regarding these issues.
21 But when Paul instead appealed to be judged by the august Nero, I commanded him to be kept safe until I could send him on to Caesar.
22 Agrippa II then told Festus: I've been wanting to hear this man! And Festus answered: Tomorrow you shall indeed hear him.
23 The next day, when Agrippa II and Berenice arrived in great pomp and splendor, they entered into the court with the chief military officers and key men of the city. Then, at Festus' command, Paul was brought forth.
24 Festus said: King Agrippa, and all men present with us, you now see this man, whom the multitudes of Jews both at Jerusalem and here insist should not live any longer.
25 But when I discovered that he had done nothing worthy of death, and since he had appealed to the august Nero, I determined to send him there.
26 However, I'm not sure precisely what to write my lord Caesar about him, and so I've brought him here especially to you, King Agrippa, in hope that after we examine him in proper legal form, I may know exactly what to write Caesar about him.
27 For it seems unreasonable to me to send a prisoner without at least listing the crimes against him.

ACTS CHAPTER 26

1 Then Agrippa II said to Paul: You're allowed to speak freely. Paul then extended his hand, and replied:
2 I am delighted, King Agrippa, to give a response to you today over the things the Judeans have accused me of.
3 This is especially so, given the fact I know you to be an expert in all the customs and issues of the Jews. I ask only that you would be patient, and hear me out.
4 The Judeans know well my life history, from my youth in Jerusalem, onward.
5 If they would admit it, they would tell you that I was brought up as an ultra-Orthodox Jewish Pharisee, the strictest sect of our religion.
6 I'm here now, being tried over our confidence in the promise God made to our ancestors,
7 The same promise our twelve tribes devotedly serving God, day and night, expect will come. It's for the sake of my confidence in this promise, King Agrippa, that the Judeans accuse me.
8 Why should you think it unbelievable that God would raise the dead?
9 But I admit that I once thought it right to do many things against the name of Jesus of Nazareth,
10 Which I did in Jerusalem, where I shut many of the righteous up in dungeons, having received authority from the chief priests to do it. And when they were executed, I even cast a voting pebble to affirm their deaths!
11 And I often punished these people in every synagogue, and tortured them into cursing Jesus. I was so determined to stop them, I even hunted them down in foreign cities.
12 Thus, I came to make the journey to Damascus, with the authority of, and a commission from, the chief priests.
13 At noon, O King, I saw on the trail a light from heaven greater than the sun that encompassed me and those who accompanied me.
14 And when we were all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me in Hebrew, which said, "Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me? You are only *kicking pointlessly against the ox goad*!"
15 And I said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.
16 "But get up, and stand on your feet, for I have appeared to you for this reason: To make you a minister and a witness both of the vision you have seen of me, and other things you I will manifest to you,
17 "As I deliver you from the people and the Gentiles, to whom I will now send you,
18 "To open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the authority of Satan to the authority of God, so they can receive the forgiveness of their sins and obtain an inheritance with all who are sanctified by their faith in me!"
19 Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.
20 But I first showed the people of Damascus and Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea--then the Gentiles after this--that they should repent and turn to God, and do things in keeping with true repentance.
21 This is why the Judeans apprehended me in the Temple, and wished to kill me.
22 Having obtained God's deliverance, time after time, I continue to this day, testifying to people, great and small, relating none other than what Moses and the prophets foretold:
23 That the Messiah should suffer, and be the first to rise from the dead. Then he would be a light to both Jews *and* Gentiles.
24 As Paul was speaking in this way, Festus cried out: Paul--you're crazy! Your overmuch education has made you insane!
25 But Paul answered: I am not mad, most noble Festus. I speak only the sober truth.
26 The King, here, understands what I'm talking about. These things are no secret to those who live in this part of the world.
27 King Agrippa, you believe the prophets, don't you? I know you believe them!
28 Then Agrippa II said [sarcastically] to Paul: You almost persuade me to be a Christian.
29 And Paul [lifted his chains, and] said: I would to God that not just you, but everyone who hears me today was almost or fully persuaded to become as I--except for these chains.
30 When Paul said this, the King, the Governor, and Berenice, along with the rest of those sitting there, arose.
31 When they retired to talk among themselves, they decided: This man has done nothing meriting death or imprisonment.
32 And Agrippa II concluded to Festus: This man might have been set free, had he not appealed to Caesar.

ACTS CHAPTER 27

1 And when the decision was made that we should sail to Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners into the care of a centurion named Julius, an officer in the Caesarean Band of troops.

2 Boarding a ship from Adramyttium, we set sail, intending to hug the coast of Turkey. Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica, also accompanied us.
3 The next day, we dropped anchor in Sidon, and Julius thoughtfully allowed Paul to venture ashore and refresh himself at the home of some friends.
4 When we left there, we sailed on the leeward side of Cypress because the winds were against us.
5 After passing through the waters of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we made it to Myra, a city of Lycia.
6 There, the centurion found a [huge] Alexandrian [grain] ship bound for Italy, and we transferred to it.
7 The going was slow for many days, and we fought the winds all the way to Cnidus, though we could not make port. Eventually we found ourselves on the leeward side of Crete, near the port of Salome.
8 After passing it with great difficulty, we made it to the "Fair Havens," an anchorage near Lasea.
9 Now after a good bit of time spent there waiting for a favorable wind, sailing was becoming dangerous to risk, it being past *Yom Kippur* in October. Paul thus spoke to those in charge of the ship, saying:
10 Gentlemen, I believe that to sail now will place this ship, its cargo, and our lives at peril.
11 Nevertheless, the centurion took the word of the navigator and the owner of the ship over Paul's.
12 And because the anchorage there was unsheltered, the overall consensus was to not spend the winter there, but to gamble that we could reach Phoenix, a Cretan port exposed only on the southwest and northwest that would make a good place to spend the winter.
13 When a light southern wind came up, they thought this was their best chance, and sailed off, hugging the coast of Crete, certain they would make it.
14 But not long after this, a tremendous storm passed over the island. The Greeks call it *Euroclydon* [a Nor'easter].
15 When the ship was caught up in it with no hope of tacking against it, we let her sail with the wind.
16 Driving hard past the bottom of an island named Clauda, we managed, with great difficulty, to maneuver a boat that hung over the stern onto the deck.
17 Once it was on deck, we ran hawsers around it and passed them under the keel to strengthen the ship [for the hull was twisting and threatening to come apart]. Then the crew, fearing we would be driven onto sand banks, dropped a sea anchor, and let the ship drift.
18 In the face of a tremendous gale the next day, we [were getting desperate, and] they threw the cargo overboard to lighten the ship.
19 The third day, we even threw the spare rigging and equipment overboard.
20 When many days passed in this tempest with not so much as a glimpse of the sun or stars, all hopes of survival left us.
21 But after days without food, Paul rose up and stood amidst the crew, saying: Gentlemen, I told you so! You should have listened to me, and not left Crete only to sail into calamity and loss!
22 But cheer up! For I assure you that not one of you will die, though the ship will not be saved.
23 This night an angel of God, whom I belong to and serve, appeared and stood at my side.
24 He said: Fear not, Paul--you must be taken before Caesar, and God has also agreed to spare the lives of all those sailing with you!
25 Because of this, gentlemen, cheer up--for I believe it shall happen just as God had it told to me,
26 Although we must be shipwrecked on an island.
27 When the fourteenth night came and we were being driven up and down the Sea of Adria, around midnight the crew [thought they heard surf breaking on land].
28 They dropped a sounding line to check the depth, and found a hundred-and-twenty feet of water beneath the keel. Soon they checked again, but this time found only ninety feet.
29 Fearing we were about to run aground, they tossed four anchors from the stern, and prayed to see daylight.
30 Some of the crew lowered the ship's lifeboat into the water on the pretext of hauling out anchors from the bow [to kedge away from the shoals due to our supply of manpower], but their plan was actually to flee.
31 Paul [realized this, and] said to the centurion and his troops: Unless these stay with the ship, you cannot be saved!
32 The troops then cut the lines to the boat and let her fall away.
33 When day neared, Paul begged them all to eat some meat, saying: This is the fourteenth day you have been without food.
34 Therefore, I urge you to eat some meat to gather your strength, for not one hair on your heads will come to harm.
35 After saying this, he took some bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all. Then, after breaking it, he began to eat.
36 Then they were all encouraged, and also ate some meat.
37 The whole company of the ship were two hundred and seventy-six souls [including the centurion and his hundred men].
38 When they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship and cast the grain overboard.
39 When day came and they saw land, they did not recognize where they were, but discovered a small bay with a beach they hoped to ground the ship on.
40 After taking up the stern anchors, they were at the mercy of the sea again, and they lowered the rudders and hoisted the mainsail to the wind, making toward shore.
41 But then they encountered two contrary currents that forced the ship aground, and the bow was stuck on a reef while the stern finally broke off from the waves battering it.
42 The Praetorians, meanwhile, wanted to kill the prisoners, lest any swim away and escape.
43 But the centurion, wishing to save Paul, forbade this, and ordered anyone who could swim to abandon ship and swim for shore.
44 And the others who could not swim grabbed boards and whatever flotsam they could, and jumped into the water, making for shore. And in these ways, everyone escaped to the safety of shore.

ACTS CHAPTER 28

1 In time, we found that we had wrecked upon an island called Malta.
2 And the foreign-speaking people were very good to us, for they kindled a fire and sheltered us because of the cold and rain.
3 Now while Paul had gathered some sticks for the fire and was laying them down, a viper crawling away from the fire struck and fastened itself onto his hand.
4 When the foreign-speaking people saw the poisonous viper hanging from his hand, they said amongst themselves: This man must be a murderer, who even though he survived the sea, is not going to be allowed to escape punishment for his crime.
5 But Paul shook the snake off into the fire and felt fine.
6 The people watched, expecting his arm to swell up or Paul to fall over dead. But after they'd watched him for a long time and saw him doing fine, they changed their minds and decided he must be a god.
7 Now in the same area were lands of the chief citizen of the island whose name was Publius, who received us and extended courtesy to everyone for three days.

8 Now the father of Publius was stricken with fever and dysentery, and Paul went into his chamber, and prayed. Then he laid hands on him, and healed him.
9 After he did this, others on the island with diseases came and were healed too.
10 The people esteemed us with honors, and when we left the area they gave us the provisions we needed.
11 Three months later, we left Malta in an Alexandrian ship that had spent the winter there. She had a figurehead of the twin gods, and was named the *Castor & Pollux*.
12 Reaching Syracuse, we stayed there three days.
13 From there, we tacked about, arriving at Rhegium, and after a day, a south wind came up and blew us to Puteoli,
14 Where we found some brethren and were allowed to spend seven days with them. Then we continued on toward Rome.
15 And in Rome, when the brethren there heard of our approach, they came to meet us as far as the forum of Appius on the Appian way, and the three taverns there. When Paul saw them, he thanked God, and was encouraged.
16 When we finally reached Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to Afranius Burrus, the Praetorian Praefect. Paul, however, was allowed to live under house arrest with a soldier who was chained to him.
17 Now after three days, Paul summoned the Jewish leaders. When they came, he said to them: Men and brethren, though I have done nothing against the people, or against the customs of our ancestors, I was still taken as a prisoner in Jerusalem, and handed over to the Romans.
18 When they examined me, they would have released me, finding no crime worthy of death in my case.
19 But when the Judeans spoke against that, I was forced to appeal to Caesar, though I had no basis to condemn my own people in doing so.
20 This is why I have summoned you, to see and speak with you, because it is for **The hope of Israel** [--the Messiah, and the resurrection--] that I am bound with this chain.
21 And the leaders said: We haven't received any letters from Judea about you, neither have any of the brethren who have come here from there had anything bad to say about you.
22 But we'd like to hear your opinions, for as regards this sect [who believe in Jesus], we know that people everywhere speak against it.
23 And when they had arranged a convenient day, many Jews came to where he was staying, and Paul preached to them from morning until evening, showing from the books of Moses and the writings of the prophets that Jesus was the Messiah.
24 And some believed what he said, and some did not.
25 And when they could not come to a consensus among themselves, they left with this one last word from Paul: Well did the Holy Spirit speak to our ancestors through the prophet Isaiah,
26 Saying: **Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive:**
27 **For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.**
28 Be it known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and *they* will accept it!
29 After Paul said this, the Jews left, arguing amongst themselves.
30 Paul, meanwhile, lived for two years in his own rented house, and welcomed all who came to him,
31 Preaching the Messianic Kingdom and the things pertaining to the Lord Jesus Christ in all confidence, with no one forbidding him.

Galatians

GALATIANS CHAPTER 1

1 From: Paul, an apostle not because any group or man gave him this title, but because he was appointed to that office by both Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead;
2 And from all the brethren who are with me, to the churches in the [southern] region of Galatia [--Antioch, Derbe, Iconium, Lystra, Perge, and Pisidian].
3 Grace and peace be to you from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ,
4 The one who gave himself for our sins, in accordance with the will of our God and Father, that he might deliver us from this present evil Age.
5 Glory be to him, forever and ever! Amen.
6 It is beyond my comprehension that you are so quickly turning your backs on [God], who called you into the grace of the Messiah, in order to accept a wholly different "Good News" than the one you first knew.
7 And really, it's not "Good News" at all. But there are some who disturb you, and turn the true "Good News" about the Messiah into a perversion.
8 [Let me say it plainly:] If we--or even an angel from heaven--ever come to you and proclaim a Gospel that differs from the one you first heard from us in any way, let him be accursed!
9 If what we said before wasn't clear enough, let me say it again: If any man preaches any other Gospel to you other than the one you first heard from us--*let him be accursed*!
10 So whom am I trying to please--men or God? Is it men? Not at all. You see, if I pleased men, I would not be the slave of Christ [for that is the price of compromise].
11 But I assure you, brethren, that the Gospel I originally preached to you was of no human origin.
12 For I did not get it from man, nor was I taught it by man. I received my theology by a supernatural revelation sent by Jesus Christ himself!
13 Now you've heard of my past lifestyle, when I was a part of ultra-Orthodox Judaism and beyond comprehension persecuted and laid waste to the church of God back then.
14 And all that time, I devoted myself to the strictest possible form of Judaism--so much so, that there were few Jews I knew who could hold a candle to my zeal, passion, and commitment to following the religious traditions of my ancestors!
15-16 But when it pleased God--who had in mind for me to serve Him from my mother's womb, and called me through His grace--to reveal His son in me so that I could, in turn, preach him to the Gentiles, I made no rush to seek advice from men about it.
17 Nor did I head to Jerusalem to counsel with those who had been apostles before me. Instead, I first went to Arabia [to study and seek God], and only later returned to Damascus.
18 After three years had passed, I went to Jerusalem to see Peter, and stayed with him for fifteen days [learning all I could from him about Jesus].
19 But at that time, I did not meet with any of the other apostles save for James, the Lord's kinsman.
20 The things I am writing, I affirm before God are absolutely true, and I am not lying to you!
21 Now after this, I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia,
22 Though I wasn't known in any of the Christian synagogues in Judea.
23 But they had all heard that, "He who used to persecute us in the past is now preaching the faith he once tore down!"
24 And they esteemed what God was doing in and through me.

GALATIANS CHAPTER 2

1 Only after a total of fourteen years did I return to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along too.
2 I made the decision to go there as a result of a personal revelation, to carefully explain the Gospel I was teaching the Gentiles. I did this privately, explaining my teachings of the Gospel to the chief members of the home church to assure that I was not, and had not, been ministering in vain.
3 But note that even when we were in Jerusalem [amongst the heads of the church], no one compelled Titus, being Greek, to be circumcised.
4 And that was despite the fact that the issue was briefly raised by some false brethren who had crept into the church--spies, really--whose only purpose was to see what our freedom in Christ Jesus was, and then try to overturn it and bring us into [religious] bondage.
5 But we never paid even slight attention to their views [--let alone repeat them as arguable secondary issues--] in order that the pure truth of the Gospel would remain in you.
6 Even those who were in leadership there--though to call them "leaders" might be a misnomer, for God esteems no man over another--really had nothing to add to what I was already teaching.
7 On the contrary, they saw and accepted that God had committed the Gospel outreach to the Gentiles to me, just as He had given Peter the outreach to the Jews.
8 For [God] who had wrought spectacular deeds through Peter when he functioned as an apostle seeking to reach Jews, did likewise to me as I reached out to the Gentiles.
9 And when James, Cephas [Peter], and John, who seemed to be the main pillars of the church, came to understand the grace of God that had been given to me, they commissioned Barnabas and me to go to the Gentiles, while they would concentrate on the reaching the Jews.
10 They asked only that we would remember the poor, something I was eager to do anyway.
11 However, when Peter came to Antioch once, I had to criticize him publicly because he was clearly in the wrong.
12 For before some of James' associates came, he had no problem eating at the same table with Gentiles. But as soon as these men arrived, he began acting like an ultra-Orthodox Jew, and separated himself from the Gentiles because he was intimidated by those from the circumcision movement who strictly keep the Torah!
13 Bad as that was, the other Jews in the church followed his example [and re-erected walls of separation between Jews and Gentiles again]. Even Barnabas, who should have known better, started aping their hypocrisy.
14 So when I saw that they were not walking correctly, in accord with the true Gospel, I stood up and rebuked Peter in front of everyone, saying: "If you, being a Jew, live more like a Gentile than a Jew [when our guests aren't around], why are you suddenly setting an example to the Gentiles that they should live like Jews?" [Peter accepted the rebuke, so you see that even this incident showed no acknowledgment of a doctrine that the Gentiles must follow Jewish Law and custom.]
15-16 Now we, who are natural-born Jews, and not Gentile sinners--knowing that a man is not placed in right standing with God by keeping the Torah, but by our faith in Jesus Christ--even *we* have believed in Jesus Christ so we *can* be justified on the basis of our faith in Christ, rather than by our obeying the commandments in the

Torah. For by the deeds of the Torah shall no man ever be placed in right standing with God!
17 But if, while we seek to be justified by faith in Christ, we are still seen to be sinners who are less than perfect, does that mean Christ somehow leads us to sin, or approves of us sinning? God forbid!
18 So then--if I were to return to a system of religious bondage that I had renounced [once I knew it could only result in my condemnation], I leave the status of a man justified in God's eyes, and return to stand in the state of a transgressor. [Therefore, to believe God would lead you into mandatory Torah observance is the same as saying that He would lead you back into the status of a transgressor.]
19 For the Law doomed and slew me [despite my own zealous observance of it]. But it did so in order that, once I realized I was dead through it, I could now also consider *it* dead [so far as my obligations to it were concerned], and by that find *true* life in God [which the Law prevented me from achieving because of my own human weakness].
20 And the life I found, I found by being and remaining crucified with Christ, and yet I live on. But it's not really Paul who lives. The one who lives is Christ in me. And the life I now live, I experience through my faith in the Son of God who loved me, and gave himself [as a sacrifice] for me.
21 Therefore, I do not scorn nor nullify the grace of God offered to me, for if right standing with God actually comes through Torah observance, then the Messiah died needlessly!

GALATIANS CHAPTER 3

1 You foolish Galatians--who cast a spell causing you to forget the truth about Jesus Christ being crucified for you, a truth explained to you all so clearly that you could not possibly mistake it?
2 I have only one question: Did you receive the Holy Spirit because you were carefully observing Mosaic Law, or because you placed faith in what you heard?
3 Are you really this stupid? Having begun your walk in the Spirit [through faith], do you now expect to perfect that walk by your own fallible human efforts [at Torah observance]?!
4 Have you suffered so much persecution [over your faith] for nothing? At least, I *hope* it's not for nothing!
5-6 Tell me--does [God], who gives the Holy Spirit and performs miracles among you, do it because you keep the Torah, or because of your hearing and believing, just as Abraham, "*believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness*"?
7 Understand then, that people who approach God on the basis of *faith* [--rather than obedience to Torah--] are the ones who are the children of Abraham!
8 And the Scriptures, foreseeing that God would eventually justify the Gentiles also through faith, was preaching that Gospel message even then when it said: **In thee shall all nations be blessed**. [This meant that by his example of faith, all men would enter into the same blessing that he and his descendants were promised.]
9 So those who approach God through faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.
10 Conversely, those who base their relationship and right standing with God on the works of the Torah are actually cursed! For it is written: **Cursed is every one that continueth not in *all* things which are written in the book of the law to do them**!
11 The notion that God reckons no man in right standing on the basis of his keeping the Torah is even evident in this verse from Habakkuk: **The just shall live by faith**.
12 You see, the Torah is not faith-based! Remember what it says: *The man that* doeth *the commandments shall find life in them*!
13 Christ has ransomed us from the curse that comes upon those who fail to keep the Torah by himself *becoming* a curse! For it is written: **Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree**.
14 He did this so that the blessing of Abraham might also be given to the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, so that we all might receive the promise of the Holy Spirit through faith. [And it is *His* job to aid us in living righteously before God, not our job to perfect that through keeping a list of commandments regulating our lifestyle.]
15 Brethren, I now need to speak in human terms to explain more of what I mean: Even in the case of *human* men entering into a binding covenant of agreement, neither of them, once its terms are established, can thereafter add to it or take away from it; it stands as written, and cannot be modified.
16 Now it was to "Abraham and his seed" that the promises in the covenant we're speaking of were made. Note that He didn't say "and to your *seeds*"--referring to many heirs--but to "**thy seed**," which is singular! And that one lone "**seed**" is none other than Christ himself!
17 And I say that the covenant God confirmed in Christ four hundred and thirty years before Moses and the Law came cannot be overturned and the promise made meaningless. Thus, it only follows that the Torah of Moses [--a secondary covenant to the one God had with Abraham--] cannot overturn the primary covenant that was in force *before* that secondary covenant existed. [Nor can it function as a perpetual covenant, for that would nullify and supersede the original covenant preceding it, which was based on a different platform, namely faith.]
18 For if the inheritance actually comes through the Torah, it no longer comes through a promise [but instead through being earned]. But we see that God gave a *promise* to Abraham [which meant that it had to received through *belief*, rather than *earned* through obeying commandments].
19 All right--so what was the purpose of the Torah then? Well, it was added as a codicil to the primary covenant because the Jewish people were sinful transgressors [incapable of moral living on their own without having their lives regulated like children]. The Torah was thus added to keep watch over them until the one "**seed**" came to whom the promise made to Abraham applied. [After that, the Torah would no longer be necessary to keep men in God's plan and right standing because the *Holy Spirit* would now do that.]
There is also one more thing to remember: The Torah was ordained by angels, and delivered to Moses, the mediator between God and the people. [This is wholly inferior to the primary covenant that was instituted one-on-one between God and Abraham!]
20 When an agreement is made by someone directly, he is not a mediator [--he is the primary signatory to the agreement--] and no mediator was used between God and Abraham [unlike at Mount Sinai, when angels played a role in the giving of the Torah]. So with Abraham, God acted on His own, and made His own direct negotiations with Abraham on a face-to-face basis [without employing anything else as a mediator].
21 But in saying these things, am I claiming that the Torah is somehow against the promises God made Abraham? God forbid! For if the Torah could have given men true life in God, righteousness would have come *through* the Torah!
22 But the Scriptures *of* that Torah reveal that even the best of us are shamefaced sinners before God, and this revelation is given so that we can understand that the promise made to Abraham as a result of his faith can only be given to those who believe in Jesus Christ.
23 But before the source and manifestation of what our faith would be in arrived, we were kept under the Torah and not allowed out

from under its umbrella into the source of faith that was yet to be revealed.
24 Thus, the Law was our tutor to introduce us to Christ so we could ultimately be justified on the basis of faith.
25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under the tutor.
26 For you are all children of God because of your faith in Christ Jesus.
27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put him on as your covering.
28 So all are one in Christ Jesus, and thus there is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male nor female in God's eyes [for all are equal].
29 And if it so be that you are Christ's, then you are also Abraham's "**seed**" [on an individual basis], and heirs [through Christ] of the promise God made to Abraham.

GALATIANS CHAPTER 4

1 Now I point out that a man's heir, when he is a child, is no different from a slave, even though he is due to inherit and become the lord of everything,
2 For he is under the care of tutors and caregivers who tell him what to do until he reaches the age of maturity that his father sets for him.
3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage to the spiritual forces in this world.
3 [*Alternate reading*]: Even so, we [Jews], when we were under the tutor of the Law, were simply carrying out the carnal ordinances appropriate to life in this age, while waiting for the Messiah to eventually come and lead us from this world, and its principles, into the next world and *its* principles.
4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent His Son, born from a woman, and born under the covenant of the Torah,
5 To redeem those who were under the Torah [by fulfilling its requirements], so that we could move beyond it into full adoptive sonship [and inheritance].
6 And because you all are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son to live in your hearts, which can now cry out, "Daddy!"
7 Because of this, you are no longer a slave, but a son. And since you are a son, then you are one of God's heirs through Christ.
8 Now before you knew God, you performed religious duties and obligations [like honoring certain days, making certain sacrifices, and doing certain things] to appease creatures that by nature are not gods, but merely masquerade as gods.
9 But now, after you know God--or rather, are known *by* God--how is it that you return to the same mindset of spiritual bondage that you cast by the wayside when you came to Christ in the first place?
10 You are [unnecessarily and legalistically] observing [Sabbath] days, Jewish New Moon [Sabbaths], Jewish Festival [Sabbaths], and [even Sabbath] *years*!
11 I am starting to think I wasted my time with you.
12-13 Brothers, I beg you to be as I now am, for I was once as *you* are now. You did me no wrong, and you know that it was as a result of a physical illness that I had the opportunity to stay and preach to you in the beginning.
14 And the physical trial I was undergoing you did not consider or reject me over, but you welcomed me as a messenger from God, and gave me homage as if I were Christ Jesus himself [when you mistakenly thought I and Barnabas were Greek gods]!
15 What has happened to the blessed fellowship we mutually shared, that you once spoke of? Back then, I know you would have plucked out your own eyes to give me if that would have helped me.
16 So am I now your enemy for simply telling you the truth?
17 Those causing these problems zealously seek after you, but in a bad way. They really want to shut you off from me in order to draw followers after themselves for their own glory.
18 Now it's commendable to be zealous for a good cause even when I'm not there [so that's not what I am criticizing].
19 My little children, for whom I am undergoing labor pains yet again to see Christ birthed in you…
20 I wish I were there with you now, and could change my tone, for I am in doubt of what will happen to you.
21 Tell me, you who want to be under the Torah: Do you hear what the [books of the] Torah say?
22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons: One by a slave woman, and one by a freewoman.
23 But the son from the slave woman was born through the normal procreative processes, while the son from the freewoman came miraculously, through a divine promise.
24 These are an allegory, for they represent the two separate covenants. Hagar, the slave woman, represents the covenant and Torah from Mount Sinai, which is the covenant whose sons are born from bondage.
25 For Hagar, as relates to the Torah, is Mount Sinai, in Arabia. It corresponds to earthly Jerusalem whose children are in religious bondage to this day.
26 But the heavenly Jerusalem above the earth is free, and that is the Jerusalem that is our true mother.
27 For it is written, **Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.**
28 Now we Christians, brethren, are children of promise as Isaac was.
29 But from then to now, the children of the flesh persecute the children of the Spirit.
30 Nevertheless, what did the Scripture say? **Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.**
31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the freewoman!

GALATIANS CHAPTER 5

1 So stand, unmoving, in the liberty Christ freed us to enjoy, and don't get caught up again in a yoke of religious bondage.
2 Look--I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you whatever.
3 For I remind those who have undergone circumcision [--and think they can stop at that--] to know that a man who receives physical circumcision [in the belief he must do that to be in right standing with God] must also keep the rest of Mosaic Law as well!
4 Those of you who now seek justification with God through the Torah have fallen away from grace, and cut yourselves off from Christ in the process!
5 Meanwhile, the rest of us, who live by the Spirit, await the assurance of true righteousness that can come only through faith.
6 You see, for those in Jesus Christ, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything. All that counts is faith operating through love.
7 You were running a good race. Who cut in front of you, causing you to break stride and not obey the truth?
8 These ideas did not originate with [God] who called you.
9 "A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough."
10 I am confident that you, through the Lord's influence, will return to a correct understanding of the faith, and that he who is making you stumble will reap his judgment, whomever that person is.

11 Oh, and by the way: If [--as a different set of liars claim--] I still preach circumcision and Torah observance as the way to God, brethren, then why do I suffer continual persecution [at the hands of the unbelieving Jews]? In fact, if I *were* preaching that sort of doctrine, the cross [and notion of a crucified Messiah atoning for sin] would cease to be a stumbling block to them.
12 I wish those troubling you would pull out their circumcision knives, and emasculate themselves!
13 For, brethren, you have been called by God into a state of liberty. Just don't use that freedom from religious obligations as a license to commit sin the flesh longs for, but serve one another in love.
14 For all the Torah is fulfilled in this one command: **Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.**
15 But if you keep biting and devouring one another--beware, lest you consume each other.
16 So I say this: Walk in the footsteps of the Spirit, and you will not take the last step of actually committing the lust of your flesh.
17 For the flesh and the spirit are in opposition to each other, and at constant war with each other--and you are always torn between which urge to follow, and you cannot do the things you really want to do.
18 But if the Spirit leads you, you are not under the Torah.
19 Now the things the flesh likes to do are obvious: Adultery, fornication, impurity of various sorts, lasciviousness,
20 Idolatry, drug abuse, hatred, argumentativeness, jealousy, wrath, strife, rebelliousness, doctrinal heresies,
21 Envying, murders, drunkenness, partying, and things along these lines which, as I have told you before, if you practice them you will not inherit the Kingdom of God.
22 But the fruit of the Spirit is: Love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith,
23 Meekness, and self-control. There has never been any law, by the way, regulating how often, or in what way, these can be done.
24 And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its evil desires.
25 If we live in the Spirit, let us walk in the Spirit.
26 Let us not desire our own selfish advancement in the community, provoking each other, or envying each other.

GALATIANS CHAPTER 6

1 Brethren, if a member of the community becomes overtaken by bad choices and sin, you who are spiritual should carefully restore him in an attitude of gentleness, exhibiting no pride or arrogance, lest you open the door to *your own* temptation.
2 Be there to help each other in whatever way you can, and always pick up those who have fallen. In this way, you will fulfill the Torah *Christ* wants you to keep.
3 For if a man thinks himself better than someone else when he really isn't, he is deceiving himself.
4 But let every man worry about his own deeds and lifestyle, rather than someone else's, and then he will rejoice in what he has done, neither being jealous of, nor thinking himself better than, the next man.
5 For every man should live up to his responsibilities.
6 Let one who is taught the Gospel by someone share every good resource he has with the man who teaches him.
7 Don't fool yourselves, for God is not mocked. You will reap what you sow!
8 The man who sows to his sinful flesh will reap spiritual gangrene. But he who sows to the Spirit shall receive everlasting life *from* the Spirit.
9 And let us not grow weary of doing good, for at the right time we will reap a harvest of reward if we do not grow tired, and give up.
10 As the opportunity arises, let us do charitable acts for all people, and especially to those believers in the Christian community.
11 YOU SEE WHAT LARGE LETTERS I AM WRITING WITH MY OWN HAND [SO YOU KNOW THIS LETTER IS FROM ME PERSONALLY].
12 [Remember that] all these who are trying to have you circumcised are "Christians" of the sort who take the easy way out, avoiding persecution in their unwillingness to suffer for the cross of Christ.
13 For these physically circumcised men haven't the slightest idea what it even means to truly keep the Law [in a *spiritually* circumcised manner]! They just show their own self-absorption by seeking to circumcise and make you disciples, that they might boast.
14 But God forbid *I* boast in anything other than the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, who helped me kill off worldly concerns, and the world's hold over me.
15 For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision gains one anything. What does gain something is a man who is a new creation from the inside out.
16 And to as many of you who are willing to accept this statement and live by it, peace and mercy to you, who are the [*true*] Israel of God.
17 I don't want to hear any more bad reports about you, for I bear enough pain in my body from the scars earned serving the Lord Jesus [in preaching the Gospel I just reiterated].
18 Brethren, the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

Jacob [James]

JAMES CHAPTER 1

1 ames, a slave of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes of Israel scattered outside of the land. Greetings!
2 My brothers, [you should] rejoice when various sorts of troubles suddenly come your way out of nowhere!
3 For know that the faith you stand in during trials will develop determination and constancy in you just as iron hardens into steel!
4 But let the fortitude that comes from perseverance make you into a mature, well-rounded man who lacks nothing.
5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask God, who gives it to all men generously--without criticism--and he shall receive it.
6 But let him ask in faith, with no uncertainty over whether or not God will answer. For the man whose faith wavers is like a wave of the sea tossed this way and that by the wind.
7 Let a doubter like that not fool himself into thinking he will receive anything at all from the Lord!
8 For a man who wavers between two different opinions without committing to one and sticking to it is a man unstable in everything he does.
9-10 [Moving on,] let the brother who is a poor man rejoice in his exaltation, but the rich man that God has humbled him--because, like flowering grass, he will pass away.
11 For the sun is no sooner risen with its burning heat, than the grass under it is withered away, and the wildflowers lose their petals, and with them their beauty. So also the rich man, in his pursuits, will fade from the scene.
12 Now blessed is the man who perseveres through the various trials of life, for when they are over he will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.
13 And let no man say, when he is tempted to sin, "God sent this temptation." God cannot be tempted with evil, neither does He tempt any man to *do* evil.
14 But every man is tempted when his ungodly wants and desires get the better of him.
15 Those ungodly desires lead to committing the various acts of sin, and sin ultimately results in death.
16 Make no mistake, my beloved brethren:
17 Every good and perfect gift is that which is from above, and comes down to us from the Father of the Stars, who [--unlike them--] never turns from light to darkness, for He never changes course from what He is.
18 Through His own creative will, He gave us [spiritual] birth through His Message of truth so we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.
19 Because of this, my beloved brethren, let every man be quick to listen [to exhortation and correction from the Word], slow [to give his own opinion,] and slow to become angry.
20 For human anger does nothing to develop the righteousness of God [in a man's life].
21 Because of this, lay down all the world's various lusts and unrighteousness, and receive--in a spirit of meekness--the engrafted Message [about Christ into your hearts], which enables you to [overcome your fallen nature].
22 But you should be doers of the Message, and not just hearers of it, otherwise you are only fooling yourselves!
23 For a man who hears, but does not do what the Message instructs him to, is like a man who picks up a mirror and looks at his natural face.
24 This sort of man sees his reflection [in the mirror of what the Scriptures reveal about him], forgets what it shows, and does nothing to change his appearance.
25 But whoever stops and looks down into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it without forgetting what he's heard--but instead developing and working out what he's been taught--shall be blessed in that!
26 If any man among your community has an outward appearance of being religious, yet cannot control the words he speaks--well, this man is deceiving himself, and his "religion" is simple vanity.
27 *True* religion, which is pure and acceptable to God, is this: To see to the needs of the fatherless and the widows when they are in lack; and to keep oneself untainted by the [evil and lusts] of this world.

JAMES CHAPTER 2

1 My brethren, don't let the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ, the **Lord of Glory**, be tainted by partiality.
2 If a man with a fancy gold ring and fine clothes visits your synagogue, and a poor man dressed in rags comes as well,
3 And you honor the man in fine clothes, and say to him, "Sit in one of the good seats," while you say to the poor man, "Stand out of the way," or "Sit on the floor at my feet"--
4 Aren't you showing partiality, and becoming judges who make biased decisions?
5 Listen, my beloved brethren: Hasn't God chosen the poor people of the world to be rich in faith, and to be full heirs of the kingdom He has promised to those who love Him?
6 But you have turned your noses up at the poor. Yet isn't it the rich who oppress you, and drag you before the seats of judges?
7 Isn't it the rich who blaspheme the honored name of Christ that was invoked upon you [when you believed and were baptized]?
8 If you obey the royal command of the Scripture--**Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself**--well, then you're doing excellently.
9 But if you show partiality to one person over another, you commit sin, and are guilty under the Torah as transgressors.
10 For whoever keeps the whole of the Torah, except for one small point, has *not* kept the whole of it, but has *broken* it--period!
11 For He who said, *Do not commit adultery,* also said, *Do not murder*. So if you don't commit adultery, but yet go murder someone--well, you're guilty of transgressing the Torah!
12 So don't just talk a good talk--walk a good walk, just as those *should* do who will be judged [not by the Torah, but] by the Law of Liberty.
13 For judgment without mercy will be upon the man who shows no mercy, and mercy triumphs over judgment. [So how would you have it in your case: Judgment or mercy?]
14 [I now need to discuss a misunderstanding some of you have about faith, and what it really is, for some have what I would say is the wrong sort of faith, and I personally want you to have the right kind of faith: faith that is a *verb* rather than a *noun*! I'll go on to explain what I mean in a moment. First, let me ask something…] What good does it do, brethren, if a man says he has faith, yet shows no evidence of it in the way he lives his life? Can that sort of "faith" save him [from the same judgment even the demons know awaits]?
15 [Here's an example:] If a brother or sister in the community is naked, and without daily food,
16 And one of you responds by saying to them, "Depart in peace--be warm and filled!" without lifting a finger to help provide the things he needs, what good does that do?

17 In the same way, faith that is simply intellectual belief that doesn't alter one's way of thinking, nor inspire him to action, is an example of dead faith--faith that is only a noun.
18 Now someone may say that, "You have faith, and I have works." Well, show me your "faith" with no evidential works, and I'll show mine *with* them!
19. [Here is what I mean: You might say that you believe in One True God, unlike a pagan polytheist. It's actually a good thing that you have that intellectual comprehension! The *but* to that is demons also have the same intellectual knowledge, but if you want to call that certainty of belief "faith," that noun-like "faith" *they also have* doesn't save *them*; it *terrifies* them!
20 [O vain man, you should understand that if your sort of "faith" goes no further than mental knowledge of facts you accept as true, you are actually a brainless man who does not realize your "faith" is not a verb but rather a noun--meaning only intellectual knowledge that doesn't result in behavior and actions consistent with what you say you believe, and thus reveals it to be dead faith, rather than living faith!]
21 Let me use our father Abraham as an example. Didn't he prove what he claimed to believe by offering his son Isaac on the altar [--and didn't this act prove his faith, and secure his position with God]?
22 Do you see how his sort of active faith walked hand-in-hand with his deeds, and by his actions his faith achieved its ultimate fullness?
23 In fact, it was this very act, which God knew would happen, that was the basis of His being able to declare, years before it occurred, that: **Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.** [Thus, the act was the zenith and proof his faith was the sort that is a verb--one that produced actions and became the basis and fulfillment of the declaration God made decades before Isaac was even born!]
24 So you see that a man's actions help place him in right standing with God, something that mere intellectually-based "faith"--with no accompanying evidence of it--does not.

JAMES CHAPTER 3

1 My brethren, not many of you should be teachers, because we teachers will be judged more severely than other people.
2 For we are imperfect, and stumble in many ways [and if we teach incorrectly, we cause many others to stumble as well]. If a man never causes offense by anything that comes out of his mouth--well, that man has arrived, and is able to control his whole body.
3 Look--we put bits in horses' mouths to make them obey us, and we can turn their whole bodies in any direction we want them to go.
4 Also ships, though they be a great size and are driven by fierce winds, are turned by a small rudder that goes in the direction that the helmsman turns it.
5 Even so, the tongue is a small organ, yet can do serious damage, just as *a little fire can burn up much wheat*.
6 Yes, of all body parts, the tongue is a fire ready to burn whatever it comes into contact with. It has an unlimited potential for iniquity. The tongue defiles the whole body by placing itself at the disposal of hell, and it's ready to inflame our heart and actions with the fire of hell itself!
7 Every sort of beast on the earth--birds, snakes, and things in the sea--is tamed, and can be tamed by normal human methods.
8 But no man can tame the tongue. It is uncontrollably evil, and filled with deadly poison.
9 It's with the tongue that we bless God, even the Father, in one breath, and then curse men, made in the image of God, with the next.
10 Out of the same mouth comes blessing and cursing. My brothers, it should not be this way.
11 Does a spring flow with sweet and bitter water at the same time?
12 Or can a fig tree bring forth olives, my brethren? Or a thorny vine figs? So no spring flows with salt water and fresh water at the same time.
13 Who among you is a wise man, endowed with knowledge? Then let him show--through his lifestyle--deeds done in meekness and wisdom.
14 But if you have bitter jealousy and contention in your hearts, don't be proud, and don't fool yourself.
15 Anyone who thinks this sort of attitude is acceptable is following the logic and reasoning of mankind and hell [and not that of God and heaven].
16 For where jealousy and strife are, confusion and every evil deed invariably follow.
17 But the wisdom that is from heaven is, first of all, pure. [And a man who walks in it] is peaceful, gentle, willing to put others' good before his own, full of mercy and good deeds, without partiality or prejudice, and without hypocrisy.
18 And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace through those who are peacemakers.

JAMES CHAPTER 4

1 Where do you think arguments and fights among you come from? Don't these come from the selfish nature of your flesh?
2 You crave something, and don't have it--and you're willing to kill to get it! You fight and struggle for what you don't have, and usually don't even get it; yet you don't have it because you won't ask God for it.
3 And if you *do* ask God for it and don't get it, the reason is because you asked for it out of a selfish motivation to satisfy your own lust.
4 You adulterers and adulteresses--do you not know that to be a friend with the [unbelieving] world is to make yourself an enemy of God? Whoever seeks to be thought of as a friend by the [unsaved] world is the enemy of God.
5 Do you think the Scriptures teach in vain that the [fallen nature] within us drives us to lust, and to envy what others have?
6 But God gives you all the grace you need to resist these drives in yourself. That's why He tells us in Proverbs, *God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble*.
7 So submit yourselves to God, and resist what the devil entices you with--and Satan will run from you!
8 Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you who sin; and purify your hearts, you doubters [who won't make a commitment and stick to it].
9 Be afflicted! Mourn and weep [over your deeds]. Let your laughter be turned to grief, and your joy to sorrow.
10 Get yourself off the throne of your own life, and let the Lord rule there--and He will raise you up [higher than you will ever go on your own].
11 Brethren, don't speak evil of each other. He who speaks evil of, and condemns his brother, speaks evil of, and condemns the Torah. And if you condemn the Torah, you are not a doer of the Torah but a judge over it.
12 There is only one Lawgiver whose judgment is right enough to save or condemn. Who are you to take that role to yourself, and judge someone else?
13 As for you who have the attitude that says, "Today or tomorrow we'll leave for such-and-such a city, stay there for a year, buying and selling, earning profit"--
14 You have no idea what tomorrow will bring! What is your life but a vapor that appears for a moment and vanishes away?

15 You should instead say, "*If the Lord wills*, we shall be alive to do this or that."
16 Otherwise, all you're doing is boasting of what *you* will decide to do, and that sort of rejoicing is evil [and idolatrous].
17 So then, a man who knows the right thing to do, but chooses not to do it--well, he is guilty of sin [and will reap the reward of sin].

JAMES CHAPTER 5

1 Listen up, you rich! Weep and howl for the miseries awaiting you!
2 Your wealth is rotting away, and your fine clothes are moth-eaten.
3 Your gold and silver are stricken with rust, and that rust will be a witness against you, and will burn up your flesh like fire--this is what you have banked up for you in the last days!
4 The wages of the workers in your fields who made you your profits--whose wages you cheated them of to line your own pockets--well, both their cries have reached the ears of the Lord of Hosts!
5 You have lived earthly lives of pleasure and gluttony, and fattened your hearts for the day of slaughter.
6 You have condemned and killed the just, who could not resist you.
7 Therefore, brothers, you be patient until the Lord returns. Remember the farmer awaits the precious crop he knows is coming, and he has long patience for it until he reaps his [two harvests].
8 You be patient as well, and don't lose heart, for the coming of the Lord draws near.
9 Don't hold grudges against each other, brethren, lest you be condemned, for the Judge stands at the door [ready to enter his court and pass judgment]!
10 My brethren, remember the prophets who spoke as ambassadors of the Lord. Use them as examples of patience in the face of suffering affliction.
11 Look--we consider those who endure to be happy. You've heard, for example, of the patience of Job, and have seen how the Lord, in the end, rewarded him by showing pity and tender mercy for his own perseverance.
12 But above everything else, my brethren, don't make oaths. Don't swear by heaven, by the earth, or by any other thing [for you don't know what the future holds, and whether you will be able to keep your word]. Just say "Yes" or "No," and leave it at that. Otherwise, you risk condemnation.
13 Is any among you being crushed by ongoing trials or persecution that seem to be more than he can bear? Prayer [is the key to endure or to find the way out]. Is he merry? Then let him play psalms.
14 Is any on his deathbed among you? Let him summon the elders of the assembly, and let them pray for him, rubbing medicinal oil upon him in the name of the Lord.
15 For the prayer prayed with faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And [if the illness has been brought on because of sins he has committed,] his sins will be forgiven.
16 Admit your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. Remember that the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man unleashes great power!
17 Elijah, for instance, was a man who battled the same lust and passion we all do, but he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and the earth didn't see rain for three-and-a-half years.
18 Then he prayed again, and the skies gave rain and the earth gave its harvest.
19 Brethren, know that if any of you backslides from the truth and another turns him back to the faith,
20 Let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his ways shall both save that man, and will hide many of his own sins as well.

1st THESSALONIANS

1st THESSALONIANS CHAPTER 1

1 Paul, Silas, and Timothy, to the Thessalonian church which is in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace and peace to you from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.
2 We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers,
3 Ever mindful in the sight of our God and Father of your work of faith--this toil you have undertaken out of love and patience born from your confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ.
4-6 And we are see verification, beloved brethren, of your being chosen by God, since our preaching came to you not just in words, but with power and the Holy Spirit, proving that. And, knowing how we behaved ourselves for your sake, you followed our example--and followed the Lord--by receiving the Message, despite the persecution, with the joy of the Holy Spirit.
7 Thus, you were examples to all believers in Macedonia and Achaia [northern and southern Greece].
8 For from you the Message of the Lord was sounded out, not only in Macedonia and Achaia--but everywhere else, people have heard about your faith in God, and we don't need to say a word about you since your reputation precedes you.
9 For they talk about how warm a reception you gave we [and the Message], and how you zealously renounced idols to serve the living and true God;
10 And how earnestly you await the return of His Son from heaven, whom God raised from the dead: Jesus, who has delivered us from the wrath of God to come [upon the earth]

1st THESSALONIANS CHAPTER 2

1 You know, brothers, that our visit with you wasn't made in vain.
2 But even as we had suffered earlier, being beaten in Philippi as you know, we were bold in our God to speak the Gospel of God to you in the face of much contention.
3 For our exhortation to you wasn't born of deceit, improper motives, or trickery.
4 But since God allowed us to be entrusted with the Gospel to proclaim it, we proclaim it boldly, with no compromise in being men-pleasers, but with the intent of pleasing God only, who tests our hearts [and notes our motives].
5 For you know that we never relied on flattery, nor did we pretend to be something we aren't in order to profit off you, and God is our witness to that as well!
6 We also didn't seek to be glorified either by you, or by anyone else, even though as apostles we might have been justified in relying on our offices to exercise a degree of authority over you.
7 But we were gentle to you as a mother nursing her children while we were there.
8 Loving you as we did, we were willing to give you not only the Gospel of God, but we would have laid our lives down for you if necessary, because you were that dear to us.
9 For you remember, brethren, our work and our passion--and how we labored at jobs day and night because we would not take a copper piece off you while we preached the Gospel of God.
10 You and God are all witnesses to the fact of how we behaved amongst you who believe, conducting ourselves in holiness, fairness, and honor.
11-12 And you know how we spoke, exhorting, comforting, and instructing you as a father does his children, so you would live in a manner worthy of God, who has called you to His Kingdom and glory.
13 Another reason we thank God unceasingly for you is because you received the Message of God you heard from us--not as a message from mere men, but as it truly is: the [living] Message of God Himself, which also grows and develops in you who believe.
14 For you, brethren, followed the example of the Christian synagogues in Judea who are in Christ Jesus, in that you suffered at the hands of your own countrymen just as they have suffered at the hands of the [unbelieving] Jews of Judea,
15 Who both killed the Lord Jesus, along with their own prophets, and have persecuted us as well. They displease God, and are against all humanity [who are not a part of them],
16 So they forbid us to preach to the Gentiles so *they* can be saved. In doing this, these [unbelieving] Jews are filling the cup up with their sins, and the full wrath of God has come upon them to the uttermost!
17 But we, brethren, though absent in body for a time, are with you in spirit, and endeavored more passionately to see you again!
18 We would have come before, and I even tried on my own a couple of times to go there, but Satan hindered us.
19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Won't it be you in his presence when our Lord Jesus Christ comes?
20 Yes, *you* are our glory and joy!

1st THESSALONIANS CHAPTER 3

1 That is why, when we simply could not wait any longer to find out how you were doing, Silas and I thought it good to be left behind in Athens alone,
2 And we sent Timothy--our brother, a minister of God, and fellow laborer in the Gospel of Christ--whose task was to strengthen and encourage you in the faith,
3 So no one would become disillusioned from the persecution you faced, though you knew that we Christians had to be prepared for such unavoidable trials.
4 Truly, we warned you when we were there that we believers would suffer tribulation, and it came to pass as we said. But I don't have to tell *you* that!
5 It's for this reason, that when I could not wait any longer, I sent Timothy to verify your faith was still strong, lest the Tempter had somehow tempted you [to turn away from the faith you had stood in], and our work would turn out to have been in vain.
6 But Timothy just returned to us with the good news of your strong faith and love, relating that you remember us fondly, always wanting to see us as much as we want to see you.
7 Therefore, brethren, we were comforted in our own affliction and distress by this news of your faith.
8 These glad tidings rejuvenate us if you keep standing in the Lord.
9 What more thanks could we give God that could adequately express our incredible joy before Him over what you've shown us?
10 We pray day and night with all our strength that we might see you in person, and teach anything left that you need to know.
11 May God our Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our path back to you;
12 And may the Lord Jesus ever increase your love toward each other, and toward all mankind, even as our love for you never ceases to grow.
13 By so doing, he will perfect your hearts in holiness before God our Father, that you will be blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his righteous ones.

1st THESSALONIANS CHAPTER 4

1 Furthermore, brethren, we beg and encourage you, in the name of the Lord Jesus, to live uprightly and to please God as we taught you, with ever-increasing devotion and zeal.
2 You remember the instructions we left you at the behest of the Lord Jesus.
3 For the will of God is that you walk in sanctification, abstaining from [every form of] sexual immorality.
4 Every one of you should know how to keep his body in a state of sanctification and honor,
5 And not in sensual lust as do the Gentiles who don't know God.
6 So no man should cheat his brother in any matter because the Lord is the avenger of those who are thus wronged. Remember we spoke, and warned you about this.
7 For God has not called us to live in uncleanness, but holiness.
8 So anyone who rejects this notion is not rejecting man, but is rejecting God who has also given us His Holy Spirit [to strengthen us in resisting these temptations].
9 But as regards brotherly *love*, you don't need me to write about that, for God has taught you how to love one another.
10 And indeed you show that you love all the brethren in Macedonia. But we implore you, brethren, that your love increase all the more,
11 And that you master the way of living a quiet life, minding your own business and working at your daily jobs as we exhorted you,
12 So you will be seen to be honest men to those outside the community, and that you lack nothing.
13 [One thing, though:] I would not have you to lack understanding, brethren, regarding those of us who have died, so that you sorrow for them in the way non-believers do, who have no hope [for their lost loved ones].
14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, then [we can be assured that] God will bring those who are asleep in him now with Jesus at his return.
15 This message comes directly from the Lord: We who are alive and remain on the earth when he comes will not meet him before those asleep in the grave will.
16 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the *shofar* of God sounding. Then the dead in Christ shall rise into the air first.
17 And those of us who are alive and on earth shall follow behind them and be taken up into the clouds to meet the Lord in the sky, and then we will ever more be with the Lord.
18 So comfort one another [who mourn for their lost loved ones] with these words.

1st THESSALONIANS CHAPTER 5

1 But as to just when this will happen, brethren, you have no need for me to write about that,
2 For you already know that the Day of the Lord will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night.
3 For when people shall say, "We have nothing to worry about; everything is peaceful and safe"--sudden destruction will come upon them just as a pregnant woman's labor pains. They will not escape when that happens.
4 But you, brethren, are not living in darkness, that the Day should overtake you like a thief striking with surprise.
5 You are children of the light and children of the day. None of us is a child of the night or a child of darkness.
6 Therefore, let us not grow lax, and sleep like others do. Let us watch, and be clear-headed.
7 For people sleep during the night, and those who get drunk, get drunk in the night.
8 But let us, who are of the day, be clear-headed, clothing ourselves with the breastplate of faith and love, and wearing our assurance of salvation [from coming judgment] as a helmet [protecting our thoughts from fear].
9 For God has not intended for us to endure His wrath, but to be preserved from it by our Lord Jesus Christ,
10 Who died for us so, whether we are alive or dead, we can live together with him.
11 Because of this, comfort and encourage each other, and build each other up as you have been doing.
12 We also beg you, brethren, to take note of the workers there whom the Lord has set in authority over you, to teach you.
13 Have great respect for them, and honor them in love for the sake of the work they're doing for you. Also, be at peace with each other.
14 Finally, we encourage you, brethren: Warn those who are troublemakers. Encourage the depressed. Support the weak. Show patience toward everyone.
15 See to it that none of you ever repays evil for evil to any man--but always do good, both amongst the fellow members of the community, and to all men outside of it.
16 Rejoice at all times!
17 Pray without ceasing.
18 Whatever happens, stay in an attitude of thanksgiving, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.
19-22 Stop extinguishing the flame of the Spirit by treating flippantly the utterance of prophecy if it arises amongst you, though you should test all prophetic utterances [by the Scriptures] and heed those that are shown to be of God, while rejecting any that appear to be evil.
23 And may the God of peace sanctify every part of you. I pray to God that your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
24 The one who called you is faithful, and will do it!
25 Brethren, keep us in your prayers.
26 Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss [from us].
27 I charge you, brethren, that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren.
28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

2nd Thessalonians

2nd THESSALONIANS CHAPTER 1

1 Paul, Silas, and Timothy, to the Thessalonian church, which is in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:
2 Grace and peace to you from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.
3 We are bound to always give thanks to God for you, brethren. And it's only right we do so because your faith grows by leaps and bounds along with the love you have toward each other.
4 And so we boast about you to all the churches of God because of your patience and faith in the face of the persecutions and tribulations that you endure,
5 Which is a sign of God's righteous judgment in counting you worthy to be a part of His Kingdom, for which you're suffering.
6 For it is fitting, in God's view, to repay those who persecute you with tribulation of their own,
7 While you who are persecuted receive God's rest along with us when the Lord Jesus and his mighty angels appear from heaven,
8 Sending down flaming fire of vengeance upon those who do not know God, and refuse to obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.
9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction, being banished from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power,

10 When he shall arrive on that day to be glorified in his righteous ones, and to be held in awe by all those who believed and accepted our testimony, including you.
11 To this end, we always pray that our God would count you worthy of this calling and, through your faith and His power, fulfill every good purpose He has in mind for you,
12 So that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in him, through the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2nd THESSALONIANS CHAPTER 2

1-2 Now as regards the issue, brethren, of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered up to him, we beg you not to be troubled or worried in your minds over a [revelation], binding doctrine, or supposed letter from us that the Day of Christ is at hand at this time.
3 Don't let any man deceive you in any way, for the Day [of Judgment] will not come before there is first [a total divorce from the truth], and the Torahless Man--the personification of Destruction itself--is revealed,
4 Who opposes every other [pagan] god or thing that is worshipped, exalting himself above them all, so that he treats himself *like* God, sitting [on his throne] in the Temple of God, trying to show that he actually *is* God!
5 Do you remember that I told you about this when I was there with you?
6 You already know what is holding back his appearance until the time arrives when he will be revealed.
7 For the secret ultimate strategy of iniquity is already maneuvering itself into place, but the [Holy Spirit] is holding it back until His restraint is taken away.
8 Then shall the Torahless One be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with one breath from his mouth and destroy at the glorious manifestation of his coming:
9 Even him [--the false messiah--] whose presence will be a reflection of Satan, bolstered with all Satan's power, employing counterfeit signs and deceptive miracles,
10 Using all the lies those perishing want to believe, completely deceiving the unbelieving people of the earth because they did not love and receive the truth that would save them.
11 Thus, God will allow them to fall into complete deception, and believe the lie,
12 So that these who took pleasure in unrighteousness, instead of believing the truth, will be utterly damned!
13 But we are always giving thanks for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God--from the beginning of time--has chosen you to be saved by sanctification of the Spirit and belief in the truth.
14 Thus, he called you through our preaching the Gospel to obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.
15 Therefore, brethren, stand firm and hold the traditions you were given, both orally and by our letter.
16 Now both our Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father, who has loved us and given us unending comfort and good hope through His grace,
17 Comfort your hearts and stand behind you in every good word and deed.

2nd THESSALONIANS CHAPTER 3

1 Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the Message of the Lord may be spread everywhere without hindrance, and be esteemed even as it is with you.
2 And pray that we will be delivered from the clutches of unreasonable, wicked men--for not all men have faith.
3 But the Lord is faithful, and will strengthen you, and keep you from the Evil One.
4 We are confident in the Lord regarding you--that you are doing, and will continue to do, the things we've told you to.
5 May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and help you patiently endure in Christ.
6 Now in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, brethren, we command you to separate yourselves from every brother who lives an idle, disorderly life, rather than following the pattern we showed you.
7 For you know how to follow our example, for we were not disorderly in our conduct among you.
8 Nor did we eat any of your food without paying for it, but worked day and night to earn money so as not to take anything from you,
9 Not because we didn't have the right to expect support because of our rank as apostles; but we went out of our way to provide for our own needs as an example to you.
10 Even when we were with you, we commanded you that if any man will not work, then he shouldn't eat.
11 We hear, though, that there are some busybodies among you too lazy to get jobs, and not working at all.
12 We encourage and command these, by the Lord Jesus Christ, that they quietly go to work and pay for their own bread [rather than looking to the church for support].
13 The rest of you, brethren, don't be weary in doing well.
14 And if any man does not obey our command in this letter, single him out and have no fellowship with him, that he may be shamed into compliance.
15 But don't view him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.
16 Now the Lord of Peace himself always give you peace, and may the Lord be with you all!
17 HERE IS MY PERSONAL SALUTATION, WHICH IS A TOKEN OF EVERY LETTER I WRITE.
18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

1st Corinthians

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 1

1 From Paul--called by the will of God to be an apostle of Jesus Christ--and from Sosthenes, our brother,
2 To the church of God at Corinth and its members, who are set apart in Christ Jesus, and called to be righteous ones together with those everywhere else who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of all of us.
3 Grace and peace to you, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.
4-8 I always thank my God for you and the grace given you through Jesus Christ that has caused you to be enriched in every word you say and every thing you know, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you. Thus, you lack no gracious gift as you await Christ's coming. He will keep you strong in the faith so you will be found blameless on the day when our Lord Jesus Christ returns [and judges the earth].
9 For God, by whom you were called into relationship with His son, Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful [and can be counted on to continue the work He has been doing in you].
10 [Mindful of what He has done for you,] by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, brethren, I beg you all to speak with one voice, and do away with any divisions among you, so that you are perfectly united with the same goals and attitudes.
11 I ask this, my brethren, because I have heard from some of those in the church meeting at Chloe's house that there is strife among you.
12 I hear you all are saying things like: "I am a follower of Paul." "I am a follower of Apollos." "I am a follower of Cephas [Peter]." "I am a follower of Christ."
13 Is Christ divided up into different parts? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of *Paul*?
14 I thank God I baptized no one but for Crispus and Gaius,
15 Lest any say that I [was baptizing disciples to myself].
16 Oh--and I did baptize the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I don't recall baptizing anyone else.
17 For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel--and preach it plainly, without relying on creative intellectual arguments [as an orator would employ], lest the [message and power of] the cross of Christ be diluted.
18 For the preaching of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved [by it], it is the very power of God!
19 For it is written: **I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.**
20 So then what can the "wise" to say in response to this? Or the Torah teacher? Or the philosopher? Hasn't God turned their worldly wisdom into foolishness?
21 For after God in *His* wisdom decided that the world through *its* wisdom would never know Him, it pleased God to use [simple] "foolish" preaching to save those who will place faith in what they hear.
22 For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks want intellectual persuasion.
23 But we preach to both the concept of a crucified Messiah, which winds up being a stumbling block to the Jews, and utter foolishness to the Greeks.
24 But to those whom God calls, both Jew and Greek, Christ [is the personification of] the power and wisdom of God.
25 This is because the "foolishness" of God is wiser than the greatest wisdom of man, and the "weakness" of God is mightier than the greatest strength of man.
26 Look at those in the church there, brethren. Do you see that God has not called many intellectuals, influential people, or aristocrats?
27 Instead, God has chosen the "morons" of the world to confound the wise, and God has chosen the uneducated [people] of the world to confound those whom the world thinks are wise.
28-29 And the common [people] of the world, and those [people] the world rejects, are the very ones God chooses to use. Yes, those whom men think are nothing, He uses, in turn, to reduce to nothing those whom the world thinks are something, so that no man before Him [can take credit for what *He* has done].
30-31 But through God [and His grace], you are one with Christ Jesus who, through God's plan for us, is the source of all wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, so that, as it is written: *Let anyone who boasts, boast in the Lord.*

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 2

1 So when I came to you, brethren, [this is why] I did not declare to you the testimony of God by using brilliant intellectual arguments or deep philosophical wisdom.
2 For I decided the only thing I wanted to know among you was [this simple message]: Jesus Christ, and him crucified.
3 In fact, I was weak, fearful, and my knees knocked when I was with you.
4 And I spoke and preached, not with skilled oratory expressing *man's* wisdom, but with the demonstration of the Spirit and power,
5 So that your faith would not be founded on the *persuasion* of man's wisdom, but rather in the power of God.
6 But to those who are mature in Christ, we convey a wisdom that is totally different from that of carnal humanity and the demonic origins behind *it*, for they [and their wisdom] will all be overthrown and demolished.
7-8 We preach the ["illogical"] wisdom of God [in sending a Messiah to be crucified], which is a mystery normal human intellect cannot understand. This was specifically a hidden wisdom that God established for our glory before the world was even created, which even the demonic powers [--and their human puppets--] over this world did not understand. For if they *had* understood it, they would never have crucified the **Lord of Glory**. [So you see, the idea made no sense to them either!]
9-10 But as it is written in the Scriptures: **Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.** But God has revealed these [once-hidden] mysteries to us by His Spirit, for the Spirit searches out the deep mysteries of God.
11 For what man truly knows the [secret] things in his heart save for his own spirit that is in him? In the same way, no man can understand the [hidden] things of God, for only God's own Spirit can.
12 And we have not received the [Satanic] spirit that governs this world, but we have received the Spirit of *God* so that we might be enlightened about all the things that He freely gives us.
13 So we speak about these things without using human wisdom and the ideas from *it*, but instead using the wisdom that the *Holy Spirit* teaches, discerning and conveying one spiritual mystery after another to spiritual people able to receive it.
14 However, the [unsaved] natural man rejects the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness so far as his unregenerate mind is concerned. He can't understand them because they must be understood through the enlightenment of the Spirit.

15-16 But a spiritual person with a mind *enlightened* by the Spirit can understand all things, while the [unsaved, natural man] simply cannot understand nor make a judgment about him and his beliefs [--for to do so would be to make a judgment against the mind and wisdom of God Himself. Remember what Isaiah said in the Scripture:] **For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him?** But [--through the Spirit--] *we* have the very mind of Christ!

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 3

1 But unfortunately, brethren, I could not speak to you on the spiritual level I wanted to reach you on, but I had to speak to you like you were carnal babes in Christ.
2 I have fed you with milk, not meat, because you weren't able to eat more solid spiritual food, nor can you do so even now!
3 You are still carnal [letting your childish impulses rule over you]. For since there is envy, strife, and division among you, is this not proof that you're carnal, and not walking as mature men?
4 When someone is foolish enough to say that, "I am a follower of Paul," or, "I am a follower of Apollos," are you not proving your carnality [and worldly way of thinking]?
5 Who is Paul or Apollos but ministers who preached the Gospel you believed, each doing the work of the Lord among the specific group he happened to be assigned to?
6 I planted, Apollos watered--but God did the growing.
7 So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything--only God, who does the growing, matters.
8 The planter and the waterer--who have the same goal in mind--are equal in God's eyes, and every man shall receive his own reward based on his own labors.
9 For Apollos and I are laborers together with God, but you are God's planted field…you are God's building.
10 According to the grace of God that is given to me as a wise master builder, I laid the foundation that another is building on. But let every man be careful of what sort of building he erects.
11 For no other foundation can be laid [upon which to build], other than the foundation of Jesus Christ.
12 It's possible for a man to build upon the foundation of Christ a structure of gold, silver, or precious stones. But it's also possible to erect a building of wood, hay, or stubble.
13 And every man's construction materials will be clearly displayed, for on Judgment Day the fire will show what he used, and the fire will test the quality of his construction.
14 If any man's work survives the fire, he will receive a reward.
15 If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss of potential reward, though he, himself, will be saved--but saved like a man running out of a burning house with only the clothes on his back.
16 Do you not know that you are the Temple of God, and that the Spirit of God lives inside of you?
17 And if a man destroys the holy Temple of God, which is what you really are, God shall destroy that man.
18 So let no man deceive himself. If any of you seems to be wise in worldly wisdom, let him become a fool so that he can *truly* become wise!
19 Because the wisdom of this world is foolishness in *God's* eyes. For it is written: **He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.**
20 And it is also written: **The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.**
21 Therefore, let no man boast about [or take his identity from] mere men [like Paul and Apollos]. Everything we do, we do for your benefit, for we are here to serve you.
22 Whether it is Paul, Apollos, Cephas [Peter], the earth, or life or death, or things in the present, or things to come--all of it is made for your benefit and good.
23 And you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 4

1 Therefore, let people see us as nothing more than ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.
2 And it is required of a steward that he be faithful to what he has been called to do.
3 But so far as I am concerned, it matters very little to me what you, or any others sitting in judgment, think of me. I don't even worry about scrutinizing myself.
4 For I can't think of anything wrong I have done. But I am not justified on the basis of having a clear conscience, but rather through the examination [and approval] of the Lord.
5 Therefore, don't presume [to judge and praise one person above another] in the Age we live in; leave that to the Lord, who will do that himself when He comes and brings to light the things done in secret, weighing the motives of the heart, and then each man shall have whatever praise from God that he actually deserves.
6 Brethren, I have expressed these concepts using myself and Apollos as examples to you so you might learn from us not to overly exalt any human man, but to think of us as no better than the sinners [saved by grace] that the writings of Scripture reveal we are, so none of you there thinks himself better than the next man.
7 What makes you think yourselves better than everyone else? What do you have that was not given to you [by someone else]? And if you admit someone else gave it to you, why do you act as if you had invented it yourself?
8 Now you are full. Now you are rich. You have been arrogant as kings, refusing any correction or reproof from us. Well, I wish you *were* all kings so we could reign with you!
9 For I think that God has appointed we apostles to be like captives marching at the end of a Roman triumphal parade as a public spectacle to the world, the angels, and to men.
10 We are morons for the sake of Christ, while you are the wise ones in Christ. We are the weak ones, while you are strong. You are respected, while we are scorned.
10 [*Alternate reading*]: We are morons for the sake of Christ, while you are the wise ones in Christ. We are the "illiterate" ones, while you are "intellectuals." You are respected, while we are scorned.
11 Even until now, we hunger and thirst. We are naked, beaten, and have no place that we can call home.
12 We labor, working with our hands. When cursed, we say blessings in return. When persecuted, we endure it in silence.
13 When slandered, we answer politely, though we are treated like scum and dirt even to this day.
14 I am not writing these things to shame you, but I write to warn you as beloved sons.
15 For even if you have ten thousand teachers in Christ, you don't have many fathers. For, in Christ Jesus, I fathered you through the Gospel.
16 Because of this, I implore you to follow my example.
17 For this reason, I have sent my beloved son Timothy, who is faithful in the Lord. He will reiterate the principles of proper conduct in Christ that I teach in every church.
18 However, some of you are arrogant, as though I will never return to you.
19 But I will visit shortly, if the Lord wills, and then I'll see for myself--not the *words* of these arrogant people, but what power they have to back up their words.

20 For the Kingdom of God doesn't stand on mere words, but it stands upon the power of God!
21 So how do you want me to come to you? With a switch, ready to use it on you; or in love, with a meek spirit?

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 5

1 Word has spread far and wide that there is a case of fornication among you so bad that not even the Gentiles have anything to compare to it: One of you is in an incestuous relationship with his own stepmother!
2 And you are actually proud [of your tolerance and non-judgmental attitude toward this person], instead of grieving over such a situation and taking action to expel the man guilty of this sin!
3 [Since you won't take action--I will!] Though absent in body, but present in my spirit, I have judged the case of this individual as if I were there in person.
4 [And so I decree:] In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together with my spirit, and with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,
5 Excommunicate and hand this person over to Satan for the destruction of his [physical life] so that his spirit may yet be saved in the Day of the Lord Jesus.
6 Your pride over this is not good. Don't you know that: *A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough*?
7 Throw out the old leaven so that you can be a fresh lump of unleavened dough--for Christ, our Passover lamb, is sacrificed for us.
8 Therefore, let us keep the Feast, not with old leavened bread, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but let us keep it with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.
9 Remember, I wrote you *before* not to fellowship with fornicators!
10 I didn't mean the fornicators of this [unsaved] world, nor with its greedy, its extortionists, or its idolaters--for to totally separate yourselves from these, you would have to leave the world altogether.
11 But to clarify what I meant, I now write to you that you must not fellowship with any man who is called a brother if he is a fornicator, greedy, an idolater, a slanderer, drunkard, or an extortionist. I don't want you to even eat at the same table with such people [lest it appear that you endorse their behavior].
12 For what authority do I have to judge those outside the community? [None.] So why aren't you reasonably judging those *within* the church?
13 But those outside the church God will judge. Therefore, *cast out from among you* that wicked person [and let God judge him]!

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 6

1 [While we're talking about judging cases in the church,] do any of you with a dispute against another in the community go and argue your cases before the unjust, rather than seeking judgment from the righteous?
2 Do you not know that the righteous will someday rule the world? And if you will rule the world, are you really not qualified to judge the simplest matters?
3 Don't you know we will rule over angels? So how much more should we have charge over the issues in *this* life?
4 Since you have issues of this life needing judgment, is it that you are setting up those least qualified in the church to do the judging [so the others in the community resort to secular judges]?
5 I say this to shame you: Is there not even one wise man in the community who can make a fair judgment between his brethren?
6 But brother goes to court against brother, and the court they go to is one judged by unbelievers.
7 The members of the community have no business suing each other anyway! Why don't you rather accept the wrong done to you? Why aren't you willing to allow yourself to be defrauded [and leave it to *God* to vindicate you]?
8 Instead, you go out to wrong and defraud others--and your fellow Christians at that!
9-10 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don't fool yourselves. Neither those who commit sexual sin outside of marriage, nor idolaters, nor heterosexual adulterers, nor male prostitutes, nor [unrepentant] homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor extortionists, will inherit the Kingdom of God.
11 In time past, some of you were one or more of these things. But you were washed and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and placed in a state of right standing in the name of the Lord Jesus, through the Spirit of our God.
12-14 "All things are Lawful unto me"--but I want you to know that all things are not necessarily good. "All things are Lawful for me"--but I will not be brought under the power of any. "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats"--but God shall destroy both it and them. The body also is not made for fornication, but for the Lord, and the Lord wants the best for it. And God has raised up the Lord Jesus [from the dead], and will also raise us up by His own power.
15 Don't you know that your bodies are the body parts of Christ [on the earth]? Shall I then take parts of Christ's body and mate them with a prostitute?! God forbid!
16 What? You mean you don't know that he who mates with a prostitute becomes one body with her? *For two*, God says in Scripture, *shall become one flesh*.
17 But he who is spiritually mated to the Lord becomes one spirit.
18 Run as fast as you can from sexual sin! Every other sin a man might commit is one done *by* the body rather than *with* the body. But he [or she] who commits sexual sin, sins with and against his body.
19 What? You didn't know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, which is inside of you, and given by God, thus meaning that you no longer belong to yourself?
20 For someone put his own life at risk to save you [--and now, according to custom, he owns your very life, and you have a debt you can never repay to get back your own freedom]. So glorify God in both your body and spirit, which belong to Him.

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 7

1 Now concerning the questions you wrote about: Yes, it is good for a husband to refrain from having relations with his wife at times.
2 Nevertheless, to avoid the chances of being tempted into fornication, let husbands and wives have normal physical relations.
3 Let the husband give the wife what she has a right to expect, and *vice versa*.
4 In marriage, each person gives up the rights over his body to the other person, husbands to wives, and wives to husbands.
5 Don't deny one another unless you both agree to dedicate yourselves to [fasting and] prayer. Then have relations again so Satan does not tempt you.
6 But I say this by God's permission, not His command.
6 [*Alternate reading*]: But what I am going to say [in verse 8] is by God's permission, and not by His command.
7 For I wish that all people were celibate as I am. But every man has his proper gift from God, be it [marriage or celibacy].
8 So I say to the single people and the widows, it is good for them to continue in that state like I do.
9 But if they cannot handle temptation, let them marry, for it is better to be married than to struggle constantly with lust.

10 And to those who are married, the Lord--not I--commands: "Let the wife not separate from her husband."
11 But if she does depart, she must not remarry, though she can reconcile with her husband. Also, the husband must not divorce his wife.
12 To the rest, I--not the Lord--say: If a brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and that woman wishes to continue living with him as his wife, he should not divorce her.
13 And the woman who has an unbelieving husband should stay with him if he wishes to continue living with her as well.
14 For the unbelieving husband is [made positionally holy] within the marriage by his wife, and *vice versa*. Otherwise, your children would be *treif*. But they are kosher in God's eyes.
15 But if the unbeliever departs the marriage, let him or her go. A brother or sister is not bound in such cases. But keep in mind that God has called us to peace [and reconciliation when possible].
16 For who can say, O wife, whether your witness will someday result in your husband embracing the Gospel? Likewise, who can say, O man, whether your influence will wind up saving your wife?
17 I say this because in every church I make the rule that each man should accept the background in which God called him, and then walk in the faith from that point on.
18 So is any man called to Christ in a state of being physically circumcised? [In other words, as a Jew?] Then he should not become uncircumcised. [In other words, he should not abandon his Judaism.] In the same way, is a man called in a state of being physically uncircumcised? [In other words, as a Gentile?] Then he should not become circumcised. [In other words, he should not become Jewish.]
19-20 Being physically Jewish is as meaningless as being physically Gentile. But keeping the commands of God, let every man abide in the same calling [--be that Jewish or non-Jewish--] that he was first called in.
21 In other cases, are you called, being a slave? Don't worry about gaining your freedom. But if you can be free, then be so.
22 For a man who is called in the Lord as a slave is really the Lord's freeman. In the same way, he who is called as a freeman is in reality Christ's slave.
23 *Christ* paid a great personal price to save you, so don't consider yourselves the slaves of *men*!
24 Again, brethren, let every man continue in the circumstances that God has called him, and develop his relationship with God therein.
25 Now concerning unmarried women: I have no solid command from the Lord on the subject, but I will share my own considered opinion as a person who has experienced the mercy of the Lord to make me faithful:
26 I think that in our present circumstances of persecution by the world, it is good for a man to be single.
27 But do you have a wife? Then don't seek [divorce]. Are you without a wife? Then don't seek to find one.
28 But if you marry, you have not fallen short of what God deems appropriate. And if a woman marries, she has not fallen short of the mark either. Even so, married people will have problems in their lives, something I'd like to spare you.
28 [*Alternate reading*]: But if you marry, you have not fallen short of what God deems appropriate. And if a woman marries, she has not fallen short of the mark either. Even so, married people will have problems in their lives. However, I release you to make your own decisions on this issue.
29 Let me make this point, though: The time is short. So men who have wives should not let marriage be what they focus on.
30 And those who now weep should live as though they weep not; they that rejoice as if they do not rejoice; they that buy [and trade] as if they had no goods requiring their constant attention.
31 And those with possessions and influence in the world should not become intertwined by them, for the normal patterns of human existence are passing away.
32 I want you to be free of various worldly cares, so keep in mind that he who is unmarried concerns himself with the things of the Lord, and how he can please him.
33 But he who is married is forced to concern himself with earthly matters like how to keep his wife happy.
34 There is also a difference between a wife and a single woman. The single woman cares for the things of the Lord so she can be holy both in body and spirit. But she who is married cares for earthly matters like how to please her husband.
35 Now this I say for your benefit--to do what is best, and not to drag you around by a leash--so you can serve the Lord without being distracted.
36 But if a man who is betrothed to a woman feels he cannot adequately deal with his passions unless he gets married--and his fiancée is of mature years--then he should go ahead and marry her. Certainly, there's no sin in that.
37 Nevertheless, a man who has his passions under control, and who has decided to remain celibate so far as his betrothed fiancée is concerned, does good.
38 So then the man who delivers his fiancée into marriage does well. But a man who does not deliver her into marriage does even better.
39 After marriage, the wife is bound to her husband as long as he is alive. But if he dies, she can marry whomever she wishes so long as the man is a believer in the Lord.
40 But she will be happier if she stays single. At least, that's my opinion; and I think my opinion agrees with the Spirit of God.

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 8

1 Now as regards foods that have been offered up in idolatrous rituals before being sold, we know that we all have knowledge [regarding things like there is only one God]. Knowledge, however, puffs up, while love *builds* up.
2 [And no man is as smart as he thinks he is, something you should keep in mind.]
3 But if a man loves God--God recognizes that man!
4 So in the matter of eating those meats and things that have been sacrificed to idols, we all know that an idol is nothing, and that there is only *one* God in the world.
5 For though there are many beings men call gods, whether in the heavens or on earth, including many "gods" or "lords"[in the form of human rulers],
6 To us, there is only one God--the Father--out of which came all things [including those beings trying to pass themselves off as gods], to whom we belong. And there is also one Lord, Jesus Christ, who created all things [including these beings], and by whom we have our very existence.
7 But not everyone has that knowledge. Some people still think there are actually other gods in existence, and when they eat such foods, they eat in conscious belief of the "gods" behind the practice [thinking those gods are taking notice of them; or else they eat it as acts of worship toward an idol]. Thus, their uneducated and immature consciences are defiled.
8 But meat that we eat does nothing at all to make us more or less acceptable to God. Whether or what we eat has no bearing on anything, really. It's neither good nor bad.
9 But be careful, lest the freedom you have becomes a stumbling block to a man who is less knowledgeable in the faith.
10 For if such a man sees you, with your knowledge, in the temple of a false god eating some of the sacrificial offerings, won't the

conscience of this less-educated brother prompt him to go in and eat himself [thinking it's allowable to participate in pagan rituals]?
11 Should your less-mature brother, for whom Christ died, perish because of your superior knowledge?
12 When you do things like this to cause immature brethren to stumble against their consciences, you are sinning against Christ.
13 So if my eating meat will cause my brother to stumble [and sin], I will not eat meat while the world stands, lest I be the cause of my brother stumbling.

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 9

1 Am *I* not an apostle? Don't *I* have the right to expect the support that should come with that, without having to toil for it? Have *I* not seen, face-to-face, Jesus Christ our Lord? And are you not my *work* in the Lord?
2 If I'm not an apostle to anyone else, I am undoubtedly one to you, for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.
3 So my answer to my critics is this:
4 Do we apostles not have the right to have a decent meal and something to drink?
5 Have we not the right to be accompanied by a believing wife, as the other apostles, the kinsmen of the Lord, and as Cephas [Peter] does?
6 Or do only Barnabas and I have to work day and night to take care of our own needs?
7 What warring soldier pays for his own equipment and food? What farmer plants a vineyard and doesn't eat from it? Who feeds a flock and takes no milk from it?
8 Is this just my own opinion? Doesn't the Torah say as much also?
9 For it is written in the Torah of Moses: **Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn.** Now did God say that because He's worried about what an ox eats?
10 Or was He saying that somehow for our benefit, so we men could learn an important axiom? It was for our sakes, no doubt, that this was written--so that a man who plows should plow in confidence that he will *see* a harvest, and that a man who threshes grain should thresh, *expecting* to partake of the grain!
11 Since we have sown spiritual things amongst you, is it outrageous if we reap from some of your *natural* things in return?
12 If others [who came after us] have this right over you, don't we [who brought you the Gospel to start with] have an even *greater* right?! Even so, we have never exercised our rights over you, but we endure our problems on our own without burdening you, lest we should somehow hinder the Gospel of Christ.
13 But are you unaware that those who minister amongst the holy things in the Temple live off the offerings at the Temple; or that those who serve at the altar eat the offerings from the altar?
14 In the same way, the Lord has established the precept that those who preach the Gospel should live off the Gospel.
15 But I have used none of these precepts to my own advantage, nor am I writing to start making use of them now, for it would be better for me to die than do that! I won't let any man have cause to criticize me, and rob me of the pride I take in what I do!
16 For though I preach the Gospel, I can take no credit for my ministry, because I am doing this because I was commanded to. In fact, woe is me if I *don't* preach it!
17 If I preach willingly, I am doing something for which God will reward me; but, willingly or not, God has given a commission to me.
18 So what is my reward then? Well, it's [the pride I take in] preaching the Gospel of Christ without profiting off it so that I don't abuse my authority in the Gospel.
19 For though I'm not a slave, but am free, I have made myself a slave to all men so that I might save as many as I can.
20 Thus, when I am around Jews, I emphasize my Jewish background and traditions so that I might reach the Jews with the Gospel message. So to those under the Torah, I appeal to them on the basis of one who thoroughly understands the Torah and what the men I meet believe about it, in hope that I might reach those who are under the Torah.
21 To reach those not under the Torah, I appeal to them as one who is also not under the Torah, though by saying that I do not mean that I live a reprobate life before God; but rather, that I live out the Torah of Christ [who has placed the perfect law of love into my heart].
22-23 To the uneducated, I likewise appear uneducated [speaking in simple terms and precepts]. I try to find something in common with all men so that I might reach out and save some, and I do this for the sake of the Gospel so that we can both share in its blessings.
24 Do you not know that while many run in a race, only one wins the prize? So run so you can win that prize!
25 Every man who devotes himself to mastering a sport doesn't give in to excess in anything. Athletes train and deny themselves in many ways in order to win a laurel crown that will dry up and waste away--but we do the same thing to win a crown that can never waste away!
26 So I fix my gaze on the finish line and sprint as hard as I can to reach it. And I also fight like a man who spars with real opponents instead of just shadow boxing.
27 Even so, I still keep my own body under subjection [to my spirit], lest somehow I fail to measure up and, after having preached the truth to others, I find myself cast away.

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 10

1 Moreover, brethren, I want you to keep in mind how our ancestors were all underneath the cloud of God that was above their camp, and that they all passed through the sea,
2 And were all baptized into Moses by passing under the cloud and through the sea.
3-4 They also ate the same spiritual food [--the manna--] and also drank the same spiritual drink, for they drank from the spiritual rock that followed along behind them. That rock, by the way, was actually a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ [and foretold his sending the Holy Spirit to humanity]!
5 Even so, God was displeased with many of them, for they were destroyed in the wilderness [despite having received a promise that God would lead them into a good land].
6 These events are examples to us not to lust after evil things as they did.
7 Nor should we be idolaters as some of them were. For it is written: **The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.**
8 Neither let us partake of sexual sin as some of them did. Twenty-three thousand died for that in one day!
9 Neither let us challenge Christ as some of them challenged [God]. Snakes destroyed them for this.
10 Neither should you grumble and complain as some of them did, and were slain by the angel called "the Destroyer."
11 Now all these things that happened to them were examples to us, and they are written as admonition to us, who are approaching the end of the world [to behave properly].
12 So let he who thinks he stands take heed, lest he fall!
13 There is no temptation that you have faced which isn't normal to humanity. But God is faithful, who will not let more come upon you than you are able to bear. And with every temptation, He will make a way to escape so you can bear it [without being overcome by it].
14 Because of this, my dearly beloved, run from idolatry [and any thought of worshipping God *and* other "deities"].

15 I know I am talking to wise men, so judge whether or not what I say makes sense.
16 The cup of blessing that we pray over--is it not partaking of the blood of Christ? The bread that we break--is it not partaking of the body of Christ? [And how much greater is that than partaking of the essence of some imaginary deity as some of these pagan rituals claim happens in the temples?]
17 For we, being many people, are made to be one loaf and one body, for we are all partakers of the one bread [which is Christ].
18 Consider physical Israel: Are not the ones who partake of the sacrifices of the altar partakers of what the altar stands for?
19 So what am I saying? That an idol is anything real, or that food which is sacrificed to an idol has any innate power or efficacious effect if eaten? [No.]
20-21 I'm saying that things sacrificed by Gentiles in such a manner are actually being sacrificed to demons [masquerading as gods], and not to the true God--and I do not want you to have communion with demons, for you cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils, nor can you partake of the Lord's table and also the table of demons.
22 Do we [dare] provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?
23 "All things are lawful for me"--but all things are not necessarily good. "All things are lawful for me"--but all things don't necessarily edify.
24 Don't selfishly worry only about your own good--concern yourself with the good of others!
25 Whatever is sold in the marketplace, go ahead and eat, asking nothing about its background for the sake of your conscience.
26 **For the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof.**
27 If an unbeliever invites you to dinner, go if you want to, and eat what he gives you. But ask nothing about the background of the food for the sake of your conscience.
28 However, if any man tells you, "This was sacrificed to idols," don't eat it for his sake, and for the sake of conscience [--for again: **The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof**].
29-30 When I say "Conscience," I don't mean your own, but that of your host. Now you might ask: "Why should my freedom be regulated by someone else's conscience? For if the grace of God permits *me* to partake of this sort of food, why should I be criticized over that for which I give thanks?"
31 Well, the actual issue is that whether you eat, drink, or do something else, you should make sure it is done to the glory of God.
32-33 Don't be a stumbling block to anyone: Either Jews, Gentiles, or the church of God, just as I accommodate everyone in what *I* do, not seeking my own good [or convenience], but the good of many other people, in hope they can be saved.

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 11

1 You should all follow my example even as I follow Christ's.
2 And I praise you, brethren, that you remember all the things I told you, and you are keeping the ordinances [regarding worship] in the way that I gave them to you.
3 But I would point out to you that Christ is the authority over every man, and the authority over the wife is the husband, and the authority over Christ is God.
4 So every man who prays or prophesies with something over his head [--especially if it reflects some earthly authority--] dishonors Christ, his true authority.
5 And every wife who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered [in the manner of a prostitute] dishonors her [husband, who is her authority]. This is as bad as if she were a woman with a shaved head [marking her as an adulteress]!
6 So if the wife isn't covered, let her hair be shaved off as well! And if it is shameful for a woman to have a masculine hair style or to have a shaved head--well, then let her cover herself up [as is proper for a woman]!
7 For a man should not hide *his* head with a veil, because he is the image and glory of God. But in the case of women, they are the glory of man.
8 For [in the beginning,] the man did not come from the woman, but the woman came out of the man.
9 Nor was the man created for the woman, but the woman was created to assist the man.
10 This is why the woman should have a sign of authority upon her head. [Remember, the angels are watching what goes on among you.]
11 Even so, neither men nor women exist independent of each other in the Lord.
12 For even though the woman first came out of a man, men have come out of women since that time, but all things come from God.
13 You tell me--is it proper [in our society] that a woman prays with her head exposed [like a prostitute]?
14 [And] isn't it only natural that if a man has a long, feminine hair style [like a male prostitute], it is a disgrace?
15 But if a woman has long hair, it is something she can be proud of, for her hair is given her for a covering.
16 If anyone has problems with these points, neither we, nor the churches of God, have any other custom.
17 Now--here's something I *do not* praise you for: When you assemble for worship, you don't come together for the better, but apparently for the worse.
18 First of all, when you come together in the church, I hear that there are cliques among you, and it doesn't surprise me.
19 For it's unavoidable that there would be factions among the congregation, that those truly approved of by God should stand out from those who are not.
20 When you assemble in one place, it is [apparently] not to eat the *Lord's* Supper.
21 [I say this because] when you eat, each one rushes to eat his own food up without sharing with someone else who is hungry, while someone else gets drunk.
22 What? You don't have your own houses to eat and drink in? Or do you disrespect the church of God and shame those who are poor? What shall I say about this? Shall I praise you over this? Well, I will not praise you.
23 For the Lord revealed to me what I passed on to you: The same night the Lord Jesus was betrayed, he took bread,
24 And when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said: "Take and eat, for this is my body, which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me."
25 In the same way, he also took the cup after eating, and said, "This cup is the New covenant in my blood. Drink it, and as often as you partake of it, do it in remembrance of me."
26 For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he returns.
27 Because of this, whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup in an unworthy manner shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord!
28 But let a man examine himself, and then eat the bread and drink from the cup.
29 For he who eats and drinks in a state of unworthiness, eats and drinks condemnation to himself, because he does not recognize the fact he is eating and drinking the Lord's [holy] body [and blood]!
30 This is why many have fallen weak and sick among you--and a number have even died!

31 For if we would regularly examine ourselves [and correct our misbehavior], we would not be judged.
32 But when we reap a penalty for what we have been judged guilty of, the Lord punishes us so that we do not receive the condemnation and punishment coming to the [unbelieving] world.
33 Therefore, brethren, when you come together to eat, treat it like a potluck and wait for one another [making sure to share what you have].
34 And if any man is too hungry to share, then let him eat at home so you don't wind up coming together in a manner that brings condemnation. The rest we need to deal with, I will get to when I come there.

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 12

1 Now regarding the subject of the Holy Spirit's operation in the church, I do not want you brethren to lack knowledge.
2 You know that you were once pagans, deceived into worshipping idols that cannot speak.
3 I thus want you to understand that no one speaking an utterance from the Spirit of God ever says something like, "Jesus is accursed!" Nor can any spirit but the Holy Spirit speak supernaturally through a man, and proclaim, "Jesus is Lord!"
4 Now there are different gifts the Spirit bestows, but there is only one Spirit behind these.
5 And there are different ways to serve within the church, but the same Lord.
6 There are also different [Charismatic] effects displayed in the church and congregation, but the same God is energizing all of it.
7 However, when there is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit through someone, it is meant to edify [the entire church].
8 One might receive supernatural wisdom regarding an issue; another may receive supernatural knowledge about a situation by the same Holy Spirit;
9 Another may receive supernatural faith [to deliver or receive miracles] by the same Holy Spirit; another may receive the talent or miraculous ability to perform physical healings by the same Holy Spirit;
10 Another might receive the power to work miracles; another might speak a prophetic utterance; another may have the gift to distinguish the anointing behind teaching or prophecy [whether it is of God or Satan]; another may receive the ability to speak or interpret an utterance in Tongues.
11 But all these wonderful things come through the operation of the one Holy Spirit who divides them up amongst the members of the community as He chooses.
12 For as a body has many separate parts, but the sum of those parts is one body, so also is Christ.
13 And by one Spirit we were baptized into one body, be we Jews or Gentiles, slave or free--and we were all given the same Spirit to drink of.
14 For the human body is not made up of one part, but is made up of many parts.
15 If our foot, for instance, were to say "I am not a part of the body because I am a foot and not a hand"--isn't it still a part of the body?
16 And if the ear were to say, "Because I am not an eye, I don't count as a part of the body"--would that make it any less a body part?
17 If the whole body were an eye, how would it hear? If the whole body was made for hearing, how could it smell?
18 But God has now arranged the different members of the body [of Christ] as it has pleased Him.
19 And if they were all the same organ, where would the rest of the body be?
20 But the way things are arranged, the many different parts of the body make up one single body.
21 So the eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" any more than the head can say, "I don't need you!" to the feet.
22 No, in fact, the parts of the body that seem most helpless are still very important.
23 And the parts of our body we think to be the least honorable, we, in fact, bestow the greatest honor [by hiding them from view], and treat with special attention.
24 For nothing needs to be done to the attractive parts of us, but God has made the body so that the most honor goes to the parts that lack the beauty that other parts have,
25 So that no part of the body is somehow more important than the other, but that the various body parts are, in one way or another, equal in importance and have an equal care for other body parts.
26 And if one part of the body suffers, all the parts of the body suffer with it. Likewise, if one part of the body is honored, all the parts of the body rejoice with it.
27 Now you all are the body of *Christ*, and each of you is an important part of his body.
28 And here are some of the parts of that body which God has placed in the church: First, apostles. Second, prophets. Third, teachers. After these, those who can do miracles; those with gifts of healing; those who can help other people; those who can give direction to the church in practical and business matters; and those who speak in Tongues.
29 Now--are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers or able to work miracles?
30 Do all have the gifts of healing? Do all speak in Tongues? Do all interpret Tongues? [No.]
31 But you should earnestly covet the greater gifts the Spirit offers. And, good as that may be, here is something even better to do:

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 13

1 Even though I could miraculously speak in the tongues of mankind and those of the angels, if I don't have [God's sort of unselfish] love in my heart, my gift is no more useful than someone blowing a horn or clashing two cymbals together.
2 And even if I had the gift of prophecy, and had perfect understanding of all mysteries; and though I had all knowledge; and though I had so much faith that I could move mountains--if I do not have [God's sort of unselfish] love in my heart, I am nothing.
3 Even if I give everything I own to feed the poor; and even if I give my body over to be burned at the stake, but do not have [God's sort of unselfish] love--it profits me nothing.
4 [God's sort of unselfish] love is patient, kind, does not envy others. It does not boast of itself, nor promote itself.
5 [God's sort of unselfish] love does not behave improperly. It does not seek its own good [but that of others]. It is not provoked, and does not hold grudges for past wrongs.
6 It does not take pleasure in unrighteousness, but instead rejoices in truth.
7 It bears up under all pressure. It looks on the positive side. It is confident in every circumstance. It endures all that comes its way.
8 [God's sort of unselfish] love will never end. But where things like prophecies are present, *they* will someday come to an end. So, too, Tongues will cease. Even [human] knowledge will vanish away.
9 For we understand some things, and prophecy helps us understand other things.
10 But when the Messianic Age has fully come, then the state in which we only have partial knowledge will be done away with.
11 When I was a child, I spoke like one, and had the understanding of one. But after I grew up, I laid aside the things of childhood.

12 You see, in this present age, it's like looking at ourselves in a foggy mirror--we can't see ourselves clearly. But in the Messianic Age, I shall know Christ as he truly is, even as he now knows me and what I am [and will be].
13 And these things will always exist: Faith, hope and [God's sort of unselfish] love. And the greatest of these is [God's sort of unselfish] love.

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 14

1 Pursue [God's sort of unselfish] love, and desire Spiritual things--and in particular, that you can prophesy.
2 For a person who speaks in a Tongue does not speak to other people, but instead to God, since no one understands the words he speaks, seeing that through his spirit he utters mysterious things.
3 But someone who prophesies speaks to other people in order to edify, exhort, and comfort them.
4 A person who speaks in a Tongue does build *himself* up, but someone who prophesies builds up the whole church.
5 While I wish you could all speak in Tongues, I wish even more that you all had the ability to prophesy, for a person who prophesies is more important than someone who speaks in Tongues--unless that person is given the ability to translate what he saying so that everyone in the church can be built up.
6 Now, brethren, what good would it do for you if I came to you, speaking in Tongues? Wouldn't it be better if I spoke normally to you, imparting some revelation or bit of knowledge? Or wouldn't it be better if I prophesied to you, or else delivered some doctrine?
7 [This illustration might help explain what I mean:] Take normal lifeless music instruments like the flute or harp. Unless a real tune is actually played on them, how will anyone know what the performer is doing?
8 If a Roman legion, for instance, hears a strange blast from a trumpeter, how will the men know what to do in battle [--whether to assemble, fight, or retreat]?
9 In the same way, unless you utter words anyone can understand, no one will know what you are saying, for you're speaking into the wind.
10 Now there are many different languages in the world, each unique.
11 But if I don't know the language, both the speaker and I will be like foreigners to each other.
12 Keeping this in mind, since you greatly desire the movement of the Spirit among you, make your emphasis that which builds up the church.
13 Thus, someone who speaks in a Tongue should pray that he be given the ability to translate what he is saying.
14 For if I pray in a Tongue, my spirit prays while my mind is put on hold.
15 So what will I do? I will pray with the spirit, *and* I will also pray with my normal understanding, just as I will sing in the spirit, *and* with my normal understanding.
16 If you don't do this, when you say a blessing through your spirit, how will someone sitting in the place of a normal person be able to say "Amen," given the fact that he doesn't know what you're saying?
17 For you may be giving thanks--and that's fine--but the other person is not built up [if you're doing this through speaking in Tongues].
18 Now I thank my God that I speak in Tongues more than any of you.
19 But inside the church, I would rather speak five words everyone understands--so that I can teach something--rather than ten thousand words in a Tongue, which no one understands.
20 Brethren, don't be childlike in your understanding [of spiritual things], although you should be as innocent as children when it comes to evil, yet wise as sages [when it comes to spiritual matters].
21 In the Torah, it is written: **With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people…yet for all that will they not hear me,** saith the Lord.
22 So then Tongues are a sign not to believers, but to unbelievers, while prophecy is not for unbelievers, but believers.
23 If therefore the whole church assembles in one place, and an unbeliever, or a man who doesn't know what Tongues is, comes in and sees everyone speaking in Tongues--won't he think you're all insane [since you're speaking gibberish to him]?
24 But if everyone happened to be prophesying, and an unbeliever or unlearned man came in, he would be confronted by what he was observing, and all the things he sees would cause conviction to fall upon him.
25 Thus, the secrets of his heart will be revealed, and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and testify that He is certainly among you.
26 In view of this, brethren, how is it that when you assemble, everyone at the same time seems to want to deliver a song, teach a doctrine, speak in a Tongue, impart a revelation, give an interpretation of a Tongue, etc.? [These things are great to do, but] let them all be done in a way that edifies everyone.
27 If anyone speaks in a Tongue, let it be by two, or at most, three--and these in order, one after another. Then let someone with an ability to interpret, translate.
28 And if there is no interpreter present [then obviously this message is not meant for the church, so] the speaker should keep silent in the church and speak to himself, and to God.
29 Let those who speak prophetically speak two or three [at a time], and let the others there judge [its meaning, and if the message is of God].
30 Meanwhile, if another person sitting there receives something else to give while someone else is speaking, let the speaker keep silent [and allow the new speaker to talk].
31 For *all* of you may prophesy, one by one, so that everyone can learn, and be comforted.
32 And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets,
33 For God is not a God of disorder, but of harmony, as is the case in all churches of the righteous.
34 Tell the wives in the church to keep silent during the service, for it is not permissible for them to speak [and interrupt things]. They are to be in subjection to their husbands, as also the Torah says [in Genesis 3:16].
35 So if they have some question, let them ask their husbands at home, for it is disgraceful for a wife to speak out [and interrupt worship].
36 [If you resent all these things I've been telling you, and think you know better, let me ask you again:] Did the Message of God originate with you and go out to others *from* you; or did it originate with others and simply come *to* you?
37 If anyone among you considers himself to be a prophet, or else thinks himself spiritual, let him acknowledge the things I have been saying are directives from the Lord.
38 [If anyone won't recognize this as truth, then let him not be recognized by the community.]
39 So, brethren, covet to prophesy, and don't stop people from speaking in Tongues.
40 But for goodness' sake, let everything be done decently, and in order!

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 15

1 Additionally, brethren, I would like to reiterate the key foundations of the Gospel I told you of earlier, which you accepted and now stand in.
2 And it is through these truths that you are saved, provided you keep what I preached to you ever in your mind--assuming you agree you have not followed mere fables [since there seems to be uncertainty in some of your minds].
3 I told you first what was most important, a truth I had also been told and believed: That Christ died for our sins, fulfilling what the Scriptures foretold.
4 And that he was buried, and arose three days later, again fulfilling what the Scriptures foretold.
5 And that he was seen by Cephas [Peter], then by the twelve apostles as a whole.
6 After this, he was seen by more than five hundred of the brethren at once, most of whom are still alive to this day, though some have passed on.
7 Then he appeared to James, and then again to all the apostles.
8 Finally, I saw him as well--in the sense, one might say, as a child born prematurely. [Meaning my supernatural deliverance from unbelief is an example of what God will do with unbelieving Israel in some future time.]
9 For I am the least of the apostles, and unworthy even to be called by that title because I persecuted the church of God.
10 But through the grace of God, I am what I am--an apostle! And the grace God bestowed upon me was not wasted, for I labored harder than all the other apostles put together, though it was not truly I who labored, but the grace of God within me.
11 But whether I preached or they preached--we all preached the same message, and you believed [it]!
12 Now if the core of our message is that Christ was raised from the dead, how is it that some of you deny there will be a resurrection of the dead?
13 If there is no resurrection, then Christ is not raised.
14 And if Christ is not raised, then we're preaching for nothing, and your faith is pointless.
15 More than that, we are found to be lying in the name of God, for we have reported on behalf of God that He raised up Christ--which is obviously impossible if the dead are not raised up.
16 For if the dead are not raised up, then Christ is not raised up.
17 And if Christ was not resurrected, then your faith is pointless, and you are still bearing the burden and penalty for your sins.
18 Those who have died as believers in Christ are also dead and without hope.
19 If Christ can do no good for us in other than *this* life, we are the most pathetic of all men.
20 But now Christ *is* risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of all who have died.
21 For since by one man death came into the world, by one man also came the resurrection from the dead.
22 For as in Adam all men are bound to die, even so in Christ shall all of us be resurrected.
23 But we shall all rise in turn. Christ first, because he is the firstfruits; and after him at his coming, each man in the order he was born [though this will all transpire in the blink of an eye from our frame of reference].
24 Then will come the end of things, when he shall deliver the kingdom to God the Father after he has overthrown every system, ruler and [spirit entity] not in subjection to him.
25 For Christ must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet.
26 And the last enemy to be put down and rendered powerless will be death.
27 For God has put all things under Christ's feet. But when it is said that, "All things are under his feet," it is obvious that does not include God, who is the one who *put* all things under Christ's feet [by giving him absolute authority over all things].
28 And after everything is [fully] made subject to Christ, then shall the Son also be subject to Him who put all things under the Son's feet so God may be all in all.
29 And so if there is no resurrection [which all I've just related hinges upon], why is it that some people are involved with baptism for the dead if the dead will not rise? Why would they be doing this otherwise?
30 And why do we always face danger and persecution on an hourly basis [for our stand that Christ was raised from the dead]?
31 I swear by the pride I take in you in Christ Jesus our Lord, that I face death on a daily basis [over my preaching the resurrection].
32 If, at Ephesus, I daily laid my life on the line like some gladiator who could die at any moment at the claws of wild beasts, what was the point of doing so if everything ends at death, and the dead have no resurrection to look forward to? We all may as well "party on" to the end then!
33 Don't be deceived. [As Menander said in his play *Thais* about a harlot:] *Bad company will corrupt good behavior.*
34 So *awake to righteousness, and do not sin*--and I say this to shame you into action, for some there clearly have no knowledge of God!
35 But some man might ask, "How are the dead resurrected, and what kind of body will they have [if they've turned to bones]?"
36 Idiot! A seed is not made alive into what it is destined to be unless it first is sown into the earth, and dies.
37 What you put in the ground is not its final form, but just a small kernel of wheat or some other grain.
38 But God gives the seed the sort of body He wants it to have, and every seed has its own body.
39 And all flesh is not the same: There are men, animals, fish and birds--and all their flesh is different.
40 And there are bodies both in the heavens and on earth. But they differ in radiance, for the radiance of the heavenly bodies differs from the radiance of earthly bodies.
41 There is one radiance of the sun, another for the moon, and another for the stars, for one star is brighter or dimmer than another.
42 It will be the same in the resurrection: the body sown will be sown a perishable corpse, but it will be raised imperishable.
43 It is sown in dishonor, and raised in splendor. It is sown in weakness, and raised in power.
44 It is sown a natural body, and will be raised as a spiritual body, for there is a natural body and a spiritual one.
45 And so it is written that the first man, Adam, *was made a "living body"*; but the last Adam was made a life-filled/life-giving *spirit*!
46 This shows us that, in the case of humans, the body that comes first is not spiritual, but natural. The spiritual body comes afterward.
47 The first prototype man, Adam, was born from the earth, and was earthly [in his outlook and thinking]. The second prototype man is the Lord Jesus from heaven.
48 Unsaved people today are as is the earthy prototype man [--still earthly and carnal]. Conversely, people who come from Jesus, the heavenly man, are like *him* [in nature].
49 And as we once naturally reflected the traits of the earthly man, so we will [someday] fully and naturally reflect the traits of the heavenly man.
50 Now I say this, brethren: Unregenerate flesh and blood humanity cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. Neither does imperfection inherit perfection.

51 But look--I show you a wonderful mystery: Not all of us will die, but all of us will be changed.
52 Yes, in a single moment--in the twinkling of an eye--at the "Last trump" when the *shofar* will sound and the dead arise in perfection, we too will be changed.
53 For our imperfect bodies must be made perfect; and our mortal selves must be made immortal!
54 So when our imperfection is clothed with perfection, and we--as mortals--put on immortality, then will come to pass what is written in the Scriptures: **Death is swallowed up in victory.**
55 **O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?**
56 Now the poisonous sting that causes death is sin, and it is the Torah that is the very strength behind sin [for it draws sin from us like a poultice, showing the sin that is inside of us].
57 But thanks be to God who gives us victory [over death and sin] through our Lord Jesus Christ.
58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be constant, immovable, and always looking to do what you can to further the Lord's work, for you know that the things you do for him are never done in vain.

1st CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 16

1 Now concerning the collection that is to be taken up for the righteous in Judea, I have the same instructions for you as I do for all the Galatian churches:
2 On Sunday [when you gather for worship], let every one of you make offerings from what God has provided him so no one feels put upon to give when I arrive.
3 And when I do arrive, I will send whatever representatives you select with letters of introduction from me to the church in Jerusalem, so they can convey your offering to the brethren there.
4 And if it's good for me to go as well, they will accompany me to Jerusalem.
5 I will come to you after I pass through Macedonia, for I am heading there.
6 It may well be that I will remain even through the winter with you, and then you can wish me Godspeed on my next journey to wherever I go.
7 I won't come right now because I don't want to come and then leave without a proper visit. I prefer to stay a while if the Lord will allow.
8 But I will remain in Ephesus through Pentecost [May].
9 You see, a great door of opportunity is wide open for me here, though there are many adversaries.
10 If, however, Timothy comes, see to it that he has nothing to worry about, for he does the same work of the Lord as I do.
11 Let no man thus treat him as anything other than my equal representative [despite his young age]. Treat him with respect, and conduct him back to here in peace, for I look forward to his arrival along with the other brethren.
12 As touching our brother Apollos, I very much wished him to go and visit you with the brethren who bring you this letter, but he did not wish to come at all at this time. He will do so when he can.
13 Keep watch, and stand firm in the faith as mature, courageous men. Be strong.
14 Let all you do be done in a spirit of love.
15 Now I beg you, brethren--Stephanus and his family were the firstfruits of my missionary work in Achaia [southern Greece], and they have devoted themselves to serving the righteous in any way they can.
16 I thus ask that you honor and heed they, and those like them, who have helped in the ministry and worked alongside us.
17 I am glad that Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus have come [and brought your letter to me]. They've helped make up for your not being able to be here to help in person.
18 They have refreshed my spirit and yours too. Respect committed people like them.
19 The churches in Turkey send greetings. Aquila and Priscilla, and the church that meets in their house, send their very best wishes too.
20 All the brethren greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss.
21 THE SALUTATION OF PAUL WITH MY OWN HAND.
22 If any man does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, may God's curse be upon him! *Come, Lord Jesus*!
23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.
24 My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.

2nd CORINTHIANS

2nd CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 1

1 From Paul--an apostle of Jesus Christ by God's will--and Timothy our brother, to the church of God at Corinth, and to all the righteous in Achaia [southern Greece]:
2 Grace and peace to you from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.
3 Blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Father of all mercies, and God of all comfort,
4 Who comforts us in all our tribulation, so that we, in turn, can comfort those undergoing their own trials, sharing with them the same sort of comfort that God has given us.
5 For as we endure our own abundance of Christ's suffering, God's comfort and consolation are likewise there for us, in abundance, through Christ.
6 And if we are afflicted, it is for your encouragement and salvation--and is effective, in turn, to help you endure the same things we do. Or, if we are comforted, it is also for your encouragement and salvation.
7 And our confidence in you is unwavering, knowing that as you are sharing in the same sort of suffering as us, you likewise shall partake of the same comfort.
8 For we would not have you be unaware, brethren, of the trials we faced in Turkey that were so bad we nearly broke under their weight, and despaired of even surviving.
9 But we had a death sentence hanging over our heads to teach us not to rely on ourselves, but to rely on God who raises the dead.
10 God indeed delivered us from what seemed certain death, and still does--and we are confident He will continue to do so!
11 Your prayers for us play a critical role in that, so that the gift [of God's provision] sent at the behest of many of you who pray for us, will cause many to give thanks on our behalf as well.
12 For our rejoicing is rooted in the fact that our conscience is clear, and we walk with all holiness and godly sincerity in all our dealings with the world, relying on God's grace and not carnal human wisdom [to guide us]. We treat everyone this way, but made special emphasis on living like this with you.
13-14 We're not writing anything too hard to read and comprehend, and I trust that you will accept and put into common practice as much of it as you understand, so that we can rejoice over each other in the Day of the Lord Jesus.
15-16 In this confidence, I was planning before to come visit so you could have a double benefit: First, by my visiting on my way to Macedonia [northern Greece]; and then again on my return from Macedonia on my way to Judea, when you could have outfitted me for the journey.
17 Since I had determined to do this, do you think I was being flippant in my plans, or that I was acting wishy-washy, as if I were the sort of person who says "yes" when I mean "no"; or "no" when I mean "yes"?
18 But just as God is true, so our word to you wasn't "Maybe yes" or "Maybe no."
19 For Jesus Christ--the Son of God--whom I, Silas, and Timothy preached to you, isn't a "Maybe yes/Maybe no" person--he is absolute and unwavering in his "Yes!"
20 For all the promises of God are fulfilled in him; and in him we say "Amen," thus glorifying God.
21-22 Now the One who has rooted us both in Christ, and has anointed us--is God, who has also sealed us, and given us the engagement gift of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.
23 Now I call on God as a witness to my soul, that I actually put off coming to Corinth [not because I wasn't being serious about my plans, but] in order to spare you.
24 You see, we don't want to have to come as a bunch of dictators over your faith, but we are fellow laborers for your joy, since you are standing firm in faith.

2nd CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 2

1 But I had decided to myself that I would not come again if I had to come in a somber attitude.
2 For if I grieve *you*, who is left that can make me glad except the ones whom I have caused to grieve?
3 That is why I wrote you in the tone that I did, lest when I arrived I would be made sad by the very folk who should make me glad. For I am confident that you all can, and should, share my own joy.
4 I wrote that letter in great distress, with a heavy heart and many tears, not in order to grieve you--but I wrote it so you could know the great particular love I have for you.
5 If anyone has caused grief, the grief was less to me, and more to you--so I will not belabor the point.
6 Let me just say that this man has been punished enough [by being disfellowshipped from the community].
7 So now you should not continue to heap condemnation upon him, but do the opposite, showing grace and comforting him, lest his grief consume him.
8 So I beseech you to bind yourselves to love him.
9 For I also wrote to you as I did to test you and see if you would be obedient to all you were told.
10 And if you forgive something, then so do I. And if I forgave anything, the person I forgave was forgiven for your benefit by me in Christ's place as his representative.
11 This was so that Satan should not gain any sort of advantage over us, for we are not ignorant of his strategies [and we know he takes advantage of unforgiveness].
12 Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach the Gospel of Christ, a door of opportunity was opened to me by the Lord,
13 But I had no rest in my spirit, because I could not find Titus, my brother. So, taking leave of them there, I went on to Macedonia.
14 Now thanks be to God who always leads us in an incense-permeated Triumphal parade in Christ, with the scent of knowledge of Him displayed to all men through us everywhere we go.
15-16 For we are to God a sweet fragrance of Christ. But to them who are saved and them who are perishing we are different smells: To the latter, we are the odor of [physical and spiritual] death. To the former, we are the fragrance of [physical and spiritual] life. And who is up to take on these tasks? [Well, if no one else is, *we* are!]
17 For we are not like those who corrupt the Message of God [to justify personal gain] as many do. We preach the Message in sincerity, as though sent and overseen by God; and we speak in Christ's name.

2nd CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 3

1 [Now that I have spoken about what we endure on behalf of the Gospel,] do we again make ourselves commendable in your eyes? Or do we--as some others--need letters of commendation either to you or from you [in order to be respected]?
2 You, yourselves, are our letter, one written in our hearts, which is known and read by all men.
3 For you are clearly a [living] letter from Christ, born from our ministry [in his name], written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God--and written not on stone tablets, but in the flesh tablets of the heart.

4-6 We are sure of this because of the trust we have to God through Christ, and not because we think *we're* anything. No, our ability is from God alone, who is the One who made us skilled ministers in presenting the new testament to humanity: Not that of the letter [of the Law], but that of the Spirit, for the letter can only kill us, but the Spirit gives us life.
7-8 But if the giving of a system that brought death [--the 10 Commandments--] written and engraved on stones was so glorious that the children of Israel could not look into the face of Moses because it shined so brightly, even though the glory was fading away, how much more glorious shall the [giving and] ministry of the *Holy Spirit* be?!
9 For if the giving of [a system that could only bring] condemnation was glorious, much more glorious is [a ministry] that bestows righteousness!
10 For even the original glory of the Torah was, and is, no glory at all in comparison to the glory [of the New covenant] that has exceeded and surpassed it.
11 For if the covenant of the Torah--which has been done away with--was glorious, much more glory remains in the covenant that shall never be done away with.
12-13 Therefore, since we have such hope, we speak openly [and hide nothing], unlike Moses, who had to put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look upon the [glory of the] very thing that was being abolished.
14 Even so, Israel's mind was blinded, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant of the Torah is read--though this veil is removed through Christ.
15 But even to this day, when the books of Moses are read, the veil is upon Israel's heart.
16 Yet when the heart of a Jew turns to the Lord [Jesus], the veil is taken away [because he now understands the truth of what the Torah pointed to].
17 Now the Lord [Jesus] *is* the [revelation that removes the veil], and where the [revelation] of the Lord is, there is liberty.
17 [*Alternate reading*]: Now the Lord is the Spirit [--the revelation that removes the veil--] and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.
18 But we all, with our unveiled faces, mirror the glory of the Lord, and we are all being changed, in stages, into the same image of his glory by the Spirit of the Lord.

2nd CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 4

1 Since by God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not grow weary [and take the easy way out by exploiting our rank as apostles of the Gospel].
2 But we have renounced all dishonest and underhanded methods of preaching the Message of God--not handling it deceitfully, but displaying its truth clearly [by our words and actions,] which all men may see and judge in the sight of God.
3-4 But if *our* Gospel is veiled to anyone, it is to those who are lost: Those unbelievers whose minds have been intellectually blinded by the god of this world to keep the glorious light of the Gospel of Christ--who is the image of God--from shining to them.
5 For we don't preach ourselves; we preach *Christ Jesus* as Lord, and ourselves your slaves for Jesus' sake.
6 For God, who commanded, "**Let there be light!**" out of the darkness, has shined in our own hearts to give the light of knowledge of His glory that was revealed in the face of *Jesus Christ* [rather than Moses].
7 But we have this treasure in the [worthless clay bodies of ours] so that the glorious power can be seen to be of God, not us.
8 For we are troubled wherever we turn, but we do not distress. We are perplexed, but we do not despair.
9 We are persecuted, but God does not forsake us. We are thrown down, but not destroyed.
10 We always bear in our bodies the death-torment of the Lord Jesus' passion the day he was crucified, that the [resurrection] life of Jesus might also be manifested in our bodies.
11 For we who live are ever being delivered to death for Jesus' sake, so that the [resurrection] life of Jesus might be manifested in our mortal flesh.
12 So then death is in and upon us so that *you* can be full of life.
13-14 We, having the same spirit of faith as David, who wrote in the Psalms: **I believed, and therefore have I spoken**, also believe, and therefore *we* speak, knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us up as well, and will bring us forth with you [on Judgment Day].
15 For all things we do and go through are for your benefit, so that as His abundant grace spreads, more and more people will give thanks, and God will be glorified.
16 This is *why* we shall not grow weary! So, though our physical body is perishing, our spirit is re-energized with new life daily.
17 For the worst that can befall us is only a light affliction that lasts but a moment, and it develops in us a far more tremendous weight of eternal glory.
18 So we fix our gaze and follow not what we see with the normal eye, but we focus on and follow the invisible--for what is visible is temporal, but what is invisible is eternal!

2nd CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 5

1 For we know that if our earthly tabernacle--our bodies--crumble to dust, we have a new and everlasting tabernacle in heaven built not with human hands, but by God.
2 For while we are in this body, we groan in our inward parts, greatly desiring to be clothed with the body from heaven that awaits us,
3 So that once we don it, we will not be found naked.
4 For we who are in this earthly tabernacle groan, being burdened by the overwhelming urge not to be naked, but to be clothed in the way that our mortality will be swallowed up in [eternal] life.
5 Now [God], who created us for this, has given us the down payment of the Holy Spirit [to lead us toward that state of ultimate perfection and eternal life].
6 Therefore, we are always confident in that knowledge while we are at home in the body and absent from the Lord.
7 For we walk by what we believe, and not by what we see!
8 We are confident, I say, and more willing to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord.
9 But we labor so that, whether we are present with, or absent from the Lord, we may be pleasing to him.
10 For we must all stand before the judgment seat of [Christ], where everyone [--saved or unsaved--] will be handed out what is appropriate to what they have done in life, be it good or bad.
11 Knowing therefore the fear of the Lord, we try to convert men to the faith. But God knows our motives are pure, and we trust you know that too, deep down.
12 For again, we do not boast about ourselves to you--but we give you the opportunity to boast about us so you can have an answer for those who glory in outward appearances and not from what is in the heart.
13 If we're "crazy," it is because we do what we do for God. If we're sane, it is because of you.
14 For the love of Christ constrains us to do this, because we have come to accept that if one died for all, then all were dead;

15 And that he died for all, so that all who are alive should no longer live for themselves, but instead live for him who died and rose from the dead [to give them true and eternal life].
16 So we no longer view people in the same way as we used to, just as we who once knew Christ as a mere human being now see *him* much differently too!
17 Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a totally new sort of creature, and the old things have passed away, making all things new.
18-19 All credit for what has been done goes to God, who has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and given us the ministry of converting people from a state of unacceptability, to a state of purity and acceptance, proclaiming how God, through Christ, was converting the world to Himself, while graciously ignoring man's sins against Him; and He has imparted that message of reconciliation to us so that we can tell others.
20 Now we are Christ's ambassadors, and it is the same as if God Himself were begging you to accept what we say. So we beg you, in the place of Christ, to be reconciled to God.
21 For God made Christ, who knew no sin, to become sin for us, so that we--in him--could be made the righteousness of God!

2nd CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 6

1 We then, working together with Christ, beg you also not to receive God's grace in vain.
2 For God says: **I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee.** And now is the *accepted time*; and now is the *day of salvation*!
3 So we do nothing that could possibly cause anyone to stumble, so that our ministry is not brought into disrepute.
4-5 But in everything we do, we patiently uphold a high standard as ministers of God despite afflictions, hardship, distress, whippings, jail, vigilante mobs, hard work, constantly having to watch out for danger, and starvation.
6-7 We display purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, and sincere love through the Holy Spirit, the message of truth, and the power of God, with the weapons of righteousness as our sword and shield.
8 We maintain a high standard in the face of honor or dishonor, whether we are spoken well of or denounced, and whether or not we are accused of being deceivers--despite our being sincere.
9 Our standard is the same if we are unknown or well-known. We are always on the verge of dying, yet we continue to live. We are always being scourged by one authority or another, but yet we survive.
10 We are ever facing sorrow, yet we always rejoice. We are always poor, yet make others rich. We never have anything, but we possess everything [through Christ].
11 O you Corinthians, we have taught you all we know, and exposed our hearts to you.
12 We never restrain our affection for you, but you restrain yours from us!
13-14 If you would show the same affection for us as we do you, I beg you, as I would my own children, to open your hearts and receive what I have to tell you: Do not enter into marriage with an unbeliever! For what accord does righteousness have with unrighteousness? And what communion does light have with darkness?
15 What agreement does Christ have with [Satan]? Or what does a believer have in common with a worshipper of false gods?
16 What agreement does the Temple of God have with idols? For you are the Temple of the Living God. Remember God said: **I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people…**
17 **Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,**
18 **And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.**

2nd CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 7

1 Dearly beloved, since we have these promises from God, let us cleanse ourselves from any contamination of our flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in reverence toward God.
2 Open your hearts to us. We have done wrong to no man, nor have we corrupted or defrauded anyone.
3 I don't say this to condemn you--for as I have said before, you are in *our* hearts, and we are ready to live or die for or with you.
4 I can speak boldly to you, for great is my pride in you. I am filled with comfort, and am exceedingly joyful through all our tribulation.
5 For when we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we had trouble on every side. We had faced every sort of fight on the outside, and we were greatly afraid on the inside.
6 Nevertheless God, who comforts the downtrodden, comforted us by the arrival of Titus.
7 And not only by his arrival, but also with the good report he told about you that brought comfort to both him and us. He told us of your longing, mourning, and passionate concern over me--which caused me to rejoice all the more when I heard that.
8 For though I grieved you in an earlier letter, I am not sorry, though for a while I *was* sorry because I knew that letter grieved you--but that was only temporary.
9 So now I am rejoicing--not that you were just grieved, but that you were grieved in a way that moved you to repentance. You had a godly sorrow, and thus were not really harmed by us in any way.
10 You see, godly sorrow brings forth repentance to salvation with no regrets, while worldly sorrow [is only a feeling with no change in behavior that] brings forth death in the end.
11 You are living proof of that. You had a godly sorrow, and look what it produced: Such a quick response it wrought in you, such a desire to wipe the slate clean, such remorse [toward sin], such fear, such strong desire, such zeal, and such vindication! In all the things you've done, you have shown yourselves innocent in this matter.
12 That's why, when I wrote to you, I did it not for the good of the offender, nor for the sake of the one offended, but I wrote it so we could all apprehend how concerned [each of us is for the other] in the sight of God.
13 Therefore we were comforted by all this, and rejoiced even more when we saw Titus and the way his own spirit was refreshed by you all.
14 For if I have boasted to him about anything regarding you, I have not been made ashamed. But just as we spoke everything to you in truth, likewise the boasting of you I made to Titus was found to be equally truthful.
15 And his inward love and passion for you is all the stronger when he remembers how obedient you were, receiving him with fear and trembling into your midst.
16 I therefore rejoice that I can be confident in you in every way!

2nd CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 8

1 Now, brethren, we want to tell you about the grace of God bestowed upon the *Macedonian* churches [and especially the church at Philippi].
2 Though facing many trials and afflictions, their abundance of joy, despite their deep poverty, caused their generosity to overflow.

3 For I can attest to the fact that, of their own free will and ability, they not only gave what they could, but went even beyond that and were willing to give until it hurt.
4 Eager to share in the task, they begged us to accept the gift [we knew they could not afford to give], and pass it on to the righteous in Jerusalem.
5 And they went beyond our expectations, first seeking God's will over what they should give before they even placed themselves at both the Lord and our disposal with their gift.
6 So we asked Titus, since he had approached you about this earlier, to return and finish this task, and receive what comes out of the grace you have for the relief fund.
7 Therefore, since you are abounding in all things like faith, speaking, knowledge, enthusiasm, and in your love for us--let us see that you abound in this grace [of giving] as well.
8-9 I don't say this as a commandment, but only to point out how the other churches have treated this task; and so I hope to see proof of your own sincere love--for you know how our Lord *Jesus Christ* displayed his own grace: Though he was rich, for *your* sake he became poor, that you, through *his* poverty, could become rich!
10 So this is my advice: Since you were the first people last year to offer to give, and the first to start a collection, it would be good for you to finish what you started.
11 So fulfill the collection from the resources you have with the same zeal you had when you decided to do it.
12 For if a man there has a heart for this, then we're ready to accept what he *can* give, not what he *can't* give.
13 For I don't mean for other men to have their bills paid while you go into debt for them.
14 But my view is one of balance: That your current prosperity can come to the aid of the Jerusalem church, which is in need; and someday their prosperity may be the source to help *you* when times get tough *there.* Thus, everything will even out in the end.
15 As the Scripture says: **He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack.**
16 But thanks be to God for His putting the same love for you in the heart of Titus that I have for you.
17 For he certainly accepted our commission to return to you; but more than that, he was eager to return.
18 And we have sent with him our brother who has been widely praised in all the churches for his work in the Gospel.
19 Not only that, but he was chosen by the churches to accompany us with the Jerusalem relief fund, which is being collected by us for the glory of the same Lord, and is evidence of your eager sincerity.
20 His presence will help us avoid any false suggestion of impropriety on our part regarding all the money we're collecting.
21 So we are *being honorable,* not only *in the sight of the Lord,* but also *in the sight of men.*
22 We've also sent with them another brother whom we have often proven faithful in many tasks, and who has been eager to go since he learned of the great confidence I have in you.
23 Now if anyone asks about this other brother Titus, he is my partner and associate in my work among you. If anyone asks about the brethren with him, they are apostles from the churches, and a glory to Christ.
24 So show love to them, and let the other churches see the proof of your own love and of our boasts about you.

2nd CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 9

1 For as regards [the great need the righteous in Jerusalem have at this time for assistance], there is no need for me to write in detail.
2 I am aware of your eagerness to come to their aid, and have been boasting to the churches in Macedonia that southern Greece was ready to get things going a year ago. Your zeal has provoked very many of them into action as well.
3 Even so, I have sent the brethren [bringing this letter] to you, to make certain you have carried through on this, lest my boasting of you be found to be premature,
4 And those from Macedonia who accompany me arrive to find you unprepared, which would bring shame for this confident boasting upon *us*, let alone you.
5 Therefore, I thought it best to encourage the brethren to go on before us to make certain that everything talked about before, regarding your blessing, was in place and ready for our arrival. I did this with the motive of seeing this be something given *as* a blessing, rather than something given out of intimidation.
5 [*Alternate reading*]: Therefore, I thought it best to send the brethren ahead of us to make certain that everything talked about before, regarding your blessing, was in place and ready for our arrival. I did this with the motive of seeing you place *yourselves* in a position to receive blessing, and not out of a desire to profit off you.
6 But I tell you this: He who sows sparingly, shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully, shall reap a bountiful harvest.
7 So let every man give out of what he has decided in his heart to share. Never give grudgingly or out of obligation, *for God loves a cheerful giver*.
8 And remember that God is able to meet every need *you* have out of His abundant grace so every need can be met, and so you can be in a position to abound in every good work.
9 As it is written: [**A righteous man**] **hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever.**
10 Now may God, who gives seed to the sower, both give you food for your tables, and multiply the harvest of the seed you have sown, increasing the fruits of your charity,
11 And enriching you to the point you can give even more, which through us will cause those to whom we deliver the gift to give thanksgiving to God.
12 For the disbursement of your charity does more than merely supply the needs of the righteous--it also results in God's being thanked by many.
13-14 This radical gift will be proof of your following the Gospel of Christ, and will show your commitment to they and all men, causing them to glorify God for you, and offer up prayers for you as a result of your generosity born from the exceeding amount of God's grace in you.
15 Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift of grace!

2nd CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 10

1-2 Now I Paul, "the one who is bold from a distance when he writes, but a wimp in person," beseech you personally, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, not to force me to show how bold I can actually be when I come face to face with those who have accused us of operating out of purely human motives!
3 For though we may be men, living and walking in bodies of flesh, we don't fight by using mortal man's weapons or mortal man's tactics.
4-5 For the weapons we use in warfare are not natural ones, but are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down human logic and every lofty mindset that seeks to hinder and exalt itself over the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity and making it obedient to Christ.
6 And we are ready to take action against every person in the church who refuses to obey God's truth after those of you who *will* obey it put it into practice.

7 Are you still making the mistake of making judgments based on outward appearances? If anyone there thinks he is one of Christ's, then he should also bear in mind that we are Christ's as well!
8 For even if I am being rather heavy-handed in speaking of the authority the Lord has given us as apostles for your building up--not your tearing down--I will not be ashamed.
9 I am not trying to arouse fear in you *only* by writing letters!
10 For "his letters," they say, "are strong and powerful, but he's wimpy in person, and can hardly string two words together."
11 Let whoever thinks that know that we will be just as bold in deeds when there as we are in letters when we are absent!
12 Now we are not daring to number ourselves with, nor compare ourselves to, some who blow their own horn and pat themselves on the back. These people who measure their lives against each other's, and compare themselves with each other, are anything but wise.
13 So we will not boast of things outside the scope our authority; we will boast according to what we did *within* the scope of authority God gave to us, including reaching you [with the Gospel].
14 For we are not overstretching in these comments as if we had not been with you from the beginning. But we were the ones who first came all the way there and preached the Gospel of Christ to you.
15-16 So we don't boast beyond what is proper--meaning, we won't take credit for other men's work [as some seem to be doing in our case]. But we have confidence that, when your [understanding] is increased, we will be more respected and heeded in your eyes, and will then have proper respect in your area of the world. Then we can go on to preach the Gospel in regions beyond you where it is unknown, rather than following in the footsteps of other men and milking their work.
17 But *he who boasts about anything should boast in the Lord*.
18 For the one who will be approved of is not the one who commends himself, but the one approved of will be the one whom the *Lord* commends.

2nd CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 11

1 Would to God you would bear with some more of my foolish talking--but I know you are bearing with me.
2 You see, I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy. For I acted as the Matchmaker between you and the one husband whose marriage I arranged with you; and I want to present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.
3 But I worry, lest somehow--as the serpent tricked Eve through his cunning--your minds will likewise be deceived into abandoning your sincere dedication to Christ [and that you'll wind up with a different husband than the one you were espoused to].
4 For if some so-called ["Super apostle"] comes and preaches a different sort of Jesus than the one we preached, or if you receive another Spirit than the one you first received, or another sort of Gospel than ours that you have not accepted--you seem open to listening and heeding the person deceiving you with these false ideas and false Christ!
5 I don't think I have shown myself inferior to these "Super apostles" in any way.
6 But though my speech may be less than brilliant, my knowledge speaks for itself as we have proven by all the things we have done among you.
7 Did I do something wrong when I humbled myself in order to exalt *you*, by preaching the Gospel of God without any notion of charging you for it?!
8 I robbed from the resources of other churches, taking donations from them to see my needs met, during my ministry there with you.
9 And when I was with you and in need, I asked nothing from any one of you. Instead, all the funds I lived off came from the brethren arriving from [northern Greece]. I have deliberately kept myself from being a burden to any of you, and I will continue that policy.
10 I swear by the truth of Christ that is within me, that no man shall stop my boasting of not taking a cent off any of you in [southern Greece]!
11 Why? Because I don't love you? Well, God knows I do!
12 But I will go on in the same manner as I have been doing to show up these self-absorbed men for what they are, since they claim to be like us, but would never follow our actual example [--which is proof of their hypocrisy]!
13 For these are false apostles, deceitful laborers, transforming themselves into the outward appearance of apostles of Christ.
14 And no wonder, for even Satan himself can masquerade as an angel of light.
15 Therefore, it is no great shock if Satan's servants can also transform themselves outwardly as servants of righteousness. Their fate will be according to the deeds they have actually done [from their black hearts]!
16 I repeat--let no one make the mistake of thinking I am a fool. But if indeed I am a fool, here is the sort of fool I am, and here is the foolishness I could boast of:
17 Keep in mind this is not the Lord's way of speech, but I'm talking like the foolish braggarts we're speaking of--so bear with me.
18 Seeing that men are boasting over mere human achievements, I will do some boasting as well [since that seems to impress you].
19-20 Because apparently you're so "smart," that you eagerly put up with these fools who boast for their own glory, and by this let them put you into bondage, and devour you, and rob you, and glorify themselves while they insult you the whole time!
21 To my shame, I admit we've been "stupid," [compared to these people,] so let me now brag like them. Keep in mind I am only talking foolishly like them--this is not what I actually believe!
22 Are *they* Hebrews? Well--so am I! Are *they* Israelites? Well--so am I! Are *they* descended from Abraham? Well--so am I!
23 Are *they* ministers of Christ? Keep in mind I am only talking like a fool. I am far more so! I've worked harder. I've been beaten more times than I can count. I've spent time in prison. I've faced death uncounted times!
24 The unbelieving Jews gave me the thirty-nine stripes five times [because I wouldn't cease to preach]!
25 Three times I was beaten with rods. Once, I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked--and one of those times I spent a full day and night in the water until someone rescued me.
26 On my many travels, I've often had to cross swollen rivers, faced bandits, and faced peril at the hands of my own countrymen. I've faced danger at the hands of the heathen. I've been in danger in cities, in the wilderness, and at sea. I've been in peril by false brethren.
27 I've spent many sleepless nights in pain and at the end of my strength hungry, on watch against danger, cold and without proper clothing,
28 Besides all the pressure from the outside, there is my inner passion and concern over all the churches I deal with daily.
29 Who there is weak without my being weak with him? Who there stumbles, that I am not indignant over it?
30 But if I really must boast, let me boast of my true weaknesses.
31 Our eternally Blessed God, the Father of our Lord Jesus, knows I do not lie:
32 In Damascus, the governor under Antipas' father-in-law, King Aretas, had a garrison of troops on the lookout for me, hoping to apprehend me.

33 But through a window, hanging on a braided rope, I was lowered down the city walls and escaped his clutches.

2nd CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 12

1 It is stupid to boast like this, but let me now tell you of some visions and revelations from the Lord.
2-4 I knew a man in Christ some fourteen years ago, who was caught up to the third [level of] heaven. Now whether he was there bodily or in the spirit alone, I can't say--God knows. And I knew this man, who--again whether there bodily or in the spirit alone, I don't know, but God knows--was caught up to the Garden of Eden which is there, and heard things so utterly incredible that he was forbidden to share them with even one soul!
5 I could glory and boast of a man like that. But even so, I refuse to glory [about what *I* have done or seen]. Instead, I will glory in my *weakness*.
6 Even if I wanted to glory--and, in truth, glory I could without being a fool--I won't, lest any man think more of me than he should, based on what he has seen or heard from me.
7 [God also didn't want me to get proud and boast,] and so, to keep me from getting overly proud of all the revelations I was given, I received a thorn in my flesh: one of Satan's [most powerful] fallen angels, who has plagued me with turmoil [every single place I go].
8 Three times, I cried out to the Lord to deliver me from this being.
9 But his answer was: "The grace I give you [to endure] is enough, for my strength is greatest when you are weak [and unable to solve your problems through *your own* strength and wisdom, for it's only then that I can fully work through you]." Knowing that, I thus prefer to glory in all my infirmities [and not grieve over them], so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.
10 Thus, I will delight in weakness, insults, and in my having to do what I must without regard for my personal safety! I will exult in distress and in persecution for Christ's sake. Yes, I will rejoice over every one of these problems--for when I am weak in these situations, I am strong [through Christ--and with *Christ* empowering me, Satan cannot possibly stop me]!
11 Yes, I have become a total fool for boasting like this, but you have forced me to. You should have had respect for me otherwise, for I am no less important or used than the highest-ranking apostles.
12 Truly the signs of an apostle were displayed among you: Signs, wonders, and mighty deeds done while I patiently endured among you.
13 For what did I do among you there that was in any way inferior to what I do in any of other the churches but for the fact I did not burden you [with my own needs]? Forgive me for this [apparent] wrong!
14 Look--this is the third time I will be coming there, and I will not take any money from you even now! I seek nothing from you but your hearts, for parents should not take from their children, but they should store up an inheritance for them.
15 I will very gladly spend my money--and even myself--for you, though apparently the more I love you, the less I am loved by you in return!
16 But that is how it was--I took nothing from you, but because I am apparently a fraud, I was merely lulling you into a false sense of security before sweeping in for the kill, right?
17 Did I make so little as one copper piece off any of the people I sent to you?!
18 I asked Titus and another brother to go to you. Did Titus ask you for any money, or did we both instead have the same attitude of refusing to take anything from you? Didn't we both behave exactly the same?
19 Again, do you think we've just been making excuses for ourselves? We speak in plain sight of God as men of Christ--but everything we do, dearly beloved, we do for your building up.
20 [I write as I do because] I truly fear that neither of us will find the other in the state we'd hope. I worry I'll find things like: Arguing, jealousy, bad feelings, disputes, gossip, rumor mongering, arrogance, and disharmony.
21 I also fear that when I return, my God will shame me among you [for the obvious failure of what I thought I had accomplished], and thus I will be broken in grief over many who have already sinned and have not repented of the uncleanness, sexual sin, and lasciviousness they have committed.

2nd CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 13

1 This will be the third time I have come to you. As Scripture says: **In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word** [accusation of a crime] **be established.**
2-3 I warned you before, and give fair warning again, as if I were there rather than absent, what I said on my second visit: I am writing to tell those who have remained in sin--and to everyone else there--that when I arrive, I will not show any mercy [but will deliver the full pronouncement of God against the impurity in the church there], since you seek proof that Christ is speaking through me. And trust me--he is anything but weak among you; in fact, he is mighty among you [which some of you will be finding out the hard way].
4 For though Christ was crucified in his human weakness, yet he is now alive by the power of God. We also, humanly speaking, are weak in him; but we will live with him by the power of God--a power that we will be also using in our dealings with you!
5 [And so I suggest you] regularly do an honest self-assessment of your thoughts, words and deeds to see if you are really in the faith. Test your own hearts and motivations. Do you recognize the presence of Jesus Christ within you--unless, of course, you are reprobates [without a true faith]?
6 I trust that you will come to see that *we* are not reprobates!
7 Now I pray to God that you do nothing that is evil--not so that we should look good in the eyes of others, but so that you should walk in integrity, even if *we* are viewed as reprobates.
8 Our job is to stand *for* the truth, and never to stand *against* the truth!
9 For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong; and we also wish for your perfection [in Christ].
10 Therefore, I write as I do while I am absent, lest when I come I must use sharp words and waste the power of the Lord given me for your building up on having to tear you down [in judgment].
11 Finally, brethren, farewell. Be mature. Be comforted. Be united, and the God of love and peace shall be united with you.
12 Greet one another with a holy kiss.
13 All the righteous salute you.
14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

ROMANS

ROMANS CHAPTER 1

1-4 Paul, a slave of Jesus Christ, who has been called to be an apostle, and separated to proclaim the "Good News" of God, which He had promised in earlier times by His prophets in the Holy Scriptures concerning His son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who was incarnated and descended, humanly speaking, from King David, and also declared to be Son of God with power through the Holy Spirit in being resurrected from the dead!
5-6 Through Christ, we have been given the grace to carry out our apostolic commission: To reach out to all nations in Christ's name with the goal of bringing them to the obedience both to and from faith--including you, who are among those called to belong to Jesus Christ.
7 To all in Rome, beloved of God, and called to be righteous: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
8 First, I would like to say that I thank my God through Jesus Christ because of your faith, which is spoken of throughout the whole world.
9-10 For God, whom I minister before with all the zeal in my innermost being in proclaiming the Gospel of His son, is my witness that I never cease to make mention of you in my prayers, requesting that it be in His will for circumstances to work out just right so that I might have the opportunity to travel there.
11 For I long to see you, that I may impart some gift from the Holy Spirit to help more fully establish you [in Christ],
12 So that ultimately we may be comforted together by our mutual faith.
13 However, brethren, I would not have you unaware that while I had often planned to come visit you so that I could have some fruit among you in Rome as I have in other nations, I found it necessary to delay.
14 For I am indebted to reach both the civilized *and* uncivilized worlds, the educated *and* uneducated.
15 So, with all the passion I have in me, I can't wait to come preach the Gospel to you in Rome also [as soon as time permits]!
16 For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. It is the very power of God that grants salvation for everyone who believes it--to the Jew first, but also the Gentile.
17 For within the Gospel of Christ, the righteousness of God is manifested, start to finish, by faith for it is written: *The just man shall* [*escape judgment, and*] *live by faith.*
18-19 For the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness on the part of men who actually know, yet suppress the truth of God by supplanting it with unrighteousness--for the truth of God is actually manifested deep down inside of them by what He has shown them [on the outside].
20 For the fact that there is an invisible realm with a God behind it has been made plain from the beginning of time by virtue of the visible universe we can see with our own eyes. The things in the visible universe display His eternal power and godhood over all things, so unbelievers are considered by Him to be without any excuse whatever!
21 You see, there was a time when all men knew God, but they refused to glorify Him as the true God, and also were unthankful. Then they became caught up in their own philosophies and ideas, causing their foolish hearts to descend into the darkness of spiritual deception.
22-23 Thinking themselves to be intelligent, they actually became fools, transforming the glory of a perfect, unchanging God into a carved statue made in their own corrupt image [reflecting their own human philosophies and ideas]. Others changed God's true form and nature into that of some sort of bird, four-footed beast, or creeping reptile.
24 For this reason, God [withdrew the convicting power of His Spirit in the human conscience, and] let them go all the way in the growing, unclean urges of their deceived hearts that were turning from Him, even allowing them to yearn for, and yield themselves up to, [homosexual] defilement with their bodies between each other.
25 Such was the fate of those who turned the truth of God into their own lies, thus worshipping and serving the creation more than the Creator who is blessed forever more. Amen.
26 This is why God allowed them to eat the full fruit of what is in man's unregenerate heart by permitting them [without the hindrance of conscience] to give in to perverted sexual
desires--for even their women burned with sexual lust for one another, twisting one hundred and eighty degrees what God had established as the natural expression of human sexuality.
27-29 In the same way, the men--leaving the natural use of the woman--burned with lust for one another, so they did that which is improper, receiving in return the full recompense for their error, which was unavoidable. For even as they did not like to retain God [and *His* truth] in their knowledge, God gave them over to a polluted mind to justify and even take pride in things like: Unrighteousness, sexual sin, wickedness, greed, envy, murder, arguing, deceit, malice, and gossip.
30-31 They became backbiters, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boasters, inventors of new ways to commit evil, disobedient to their parents, unteachable, oath-breakers, lacking love for even their own families, stubborn, and unmerciful.
32 Even though they knew [deep down] that in God's view those who do such things are deserving of death, they not only went ahead and did them, but they even approved of others doing likewise.

ROMANS CHAPTER 2

1 Therefore, O man, you who do the same things, yet judge yourself better than the next man, are without excuse, and only condemning yourself [out of your own mouth].
2 We are sure that the God will justly punish *everyone* who does those sorts of things [whether in or out of the church].
3 Do you really think that you, O man, who condemns others for the same things you do [in secret], will escape the judgment of God?
4 Or do you scorn the riches of His goodness and long-suffering patience toward you, not realizing that the goodness of God [in withholding judgment against you] is actually beckoning you to repentance?
5-6 Your hard and unrepentant heart is ultimately storing up for you a measure of God's wrath that will be revealed on the Day of Wrath, when the righteous judgment of God will be let loose, and every man will experience judgment based on what he has done.
7 Those who have patiently pursued doing good will find glory, honor, immortality, and eternal life.
8-9 But those who have been contentious and did not obey the truth, but instead chose to follow the path of unrighteousness, will find indignation and wrath, and tribulation and anguish. This will fall upon all who do
evil--the Jew first, but also the Gentile.
10 But every man who does good shall receive glory, honor, and peace--the Jew first, but also the Gentile.
11-13 For God shows no partiality, and as many who have committed sin outside of the Torah will also perish outside of the Torah; while as many who have known the Torah and yet sinned will be judged *by* the Torah--for it is not the hearers of the Torah

who will be in right standing with God, but those who '**hear therefore, and do**' what the Torah said to do.
14 So when the Gentiles, who do not know the Torah, do by nature what the Torah teaches, these Gentiles--though they don't have or know the written Torah--show by their conscience that they understand the heart of what the Torah teaches.
15-16 You see, they show the presence of the universal precepts of the Torah in their hearts, and their consciences will either condemn or console them on Judgment Day, when God shall judge the secret parts of men's lives through Jesus Christ, as the Gospel I teach illustrates.
17-18 Look--you might be called a Jew, and boast of your security in God from the fact you have been taught the Torah, know His will, and can discern the essential points of right and wrong the Torah teaches.
19 You may be confident that your knowledge makes you a guide to the blind, and permits you to shine as a light to those who walk in darkness.
20 You may believe, because you have the knowledge and truth in the Torah, that you are qualified to teach the foolish, and the new converts.
21 But do you, who teach others, learn from your own teachings? If you preach that a man should not steal, do you steal [and somehow justify it]?
22 You, who say that a man should not commit adultery--do you commit adultery [and somehow justify it]? Do you, who abhor idols of false gods, rob sanctuaries?
23 Do you, who boast of your knowledge of the Torah, dishonor God by your *breaking* of that Torah?
24 For you [who behave like this] are an example of what the Scriptures say: **The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you**.
25 You see, circumcision is profitable if you actually keep the Torah. But if you are a transgressor of the Torah, your circumcision is the same as uncircumcision. [In other words, your circumcision will not keep you in covenant with God if you walk in sin.]
26 Therefore, if a physically uncircumcised Gentile upholds the righteousness that the Torah teaches, won't that be counted as if he were physically circumcised?
27 So if someone, though uncircumcised by background, keeps the morality of the Torah--won't that fact pass judgment upon you who, despite having circumcision and [knowledge of] the written Torah, transgress it?
28 For a Jew is not what a man looks like on the outside; neither is true circumcision that which pertains to an operation on the flesh.
29 But he is a Jew, who is one on the inside; and true circumcision is that of the heart performed by the Spirit, rather than one who has simply had an operation on the flesh to uphold the letter of the Torah. Such a "Jew," whose heart is circumcised, is the one whose praise is not of men, but of God.

ROMANS CHAPTER 3

1 Well, then--what advantage is there in being a Jew? Or what good is there in being circumcised?
2. There is actually quite a bit. It was to the Jews that the Scriptures and revelations of God were given.
3 And what if some [of the Jews] were unfaithful? Shall their unfaithfulness cancel out *God's* faithfulness?
4 God forbid, no! Let God be absolutely true even if *everyone is a liar*. As it is written: **That thou** [God] **mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged**.
5 But if our unrighteousness helps, by contrast, to show how righteous God actually is--shall we say that God Himself is being unfair if He sends His retribution upon us *for* our unrighteousness? I'm looking at this the way some man might think.
6 God forbid, no--for how then could God send judgment upon the world [for *its* sin, which He indeed does, and shall do]?
7 [Some might say:] "If God's truth is shown more clearly by my lie, and thereby brings God glory, why would He send judgment upon me for being a sinner?"
8 If such a ridiculous statement *were* true, then--as some whose damnation is warranted claim we teach--we *may as well* go on and say: "Let's do evil, because good will ultimately come out of it!"
9 So--am I saying we Jews are better than the Gentiles? No, not at all, for we have already proven that both Jews and Gentiles are equally condemned as sinners.
10 As it is written: **There is *none* righteous, no, not one:**
11 **There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.**
12 **They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.**
13 **Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips:**
14 **Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness:**
15 **Their feet are swift to shed blood:**
16 **Destruction and misery are in their ways:**
17 **And the way of peace have they not known:**
18 **There is no fear of God before their eyes.**
19 Now we know that the [curses, warnings against sin, and other points contained within the Torah] were meant for those who were given the Torah, and were expected to be under it! [Why?] So that no one can boast, and that all the world can know mankind is ultimately guilty before God [--even those who have the Torah, and thus have absolute knowledge of what sin is].
20 Therefore, by the deeds of the Torah [--either the abstaining from sin, or the performance of positive commandments and righteous deeds--] *no human shall ever be placed in right standing with God*, for the purpose of the Torah is to impart the knowledge of sin [leaving men accountable when they see their inability to truly *keep* the Torah].
21-22 But now the righteousness of God outside of the Torah has been revealed, even though it was actually attested to by the Scriptures and the prophets [*in* the Torah]: the righteousness founded on faith in Jesus Christ, which comes to all, and rests upon all who believe, for all are treated equally.
23-26 You see, all have sinned, and come short of the perfection of God. Even so, they are placed in right standing with God freely--by His graciousness--through the redemption that comes through Christ Jesus, the agent God sent to pay the penalty for our sins through faith in his blood. God's strategy in this has finally been revealed in our time, so we now understand how God was actually righteous in withholding the deserved penalty for man's sins in the past [and letting the punishment for those sins fall upon Christ instead], thus explaining how He can remain unwavering in His own perfect righteousness when placing in right standing an otherwise condemned sinner who believes in Jesus!
27 With that understanding, where is our right to boast [about what we have done or can do to be accepted by God]? There is none. That being the case, then by what law is our right to boast excluded? Is it by the Torah, which is based on works [of deeds and obedience, and not faith]? No, not at all. It is by the law of faith.
28 Thus, we conclude that a man is placed in right standing with God through faith, totally independent of anything he does under Mosaic Law.
29-30 Since that's so, can we still hold the view that God is the God only of the Jews [and those physically descended from Abraham]?

By extension of our conclusions, is He not equally the God of the Gentiles [who must likewise come to Him as do the Jews--through faith]? Yes--on that basis, He must be the God of the Gentiles also, seeing it is the same God who shall place in right standing both the circumcised man and the uncircumcised man through faith [independent of anything else].
31 But do we make void the Torah in the sense of now having a license to sin because we've come to faith? God forbid! Rather, we actually stand on what the Torah teaches [--the need to come to faith to achieve true righteousness before God!]

ROMANS CHAPTER 4

1 What can we Jews learn from Abraham--our father, physically speaking--about these revelations?
2 If Abraham was somehow placed in right standing with God on account of something he did, then he obviously had something to boast about. But from God's view, it was not on the basis of Abraham's deeds [that he was placed in a position of right standing].
3 For what did the Scripture say? **Abraham *believed* God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.**
4 Now to the man who works, his reward is not given out of goodness, but is earned by what the man has done. [In other words, he is entitled to payment for his service.]
5-8 But to the man who does not work for [and earn] reward, but instead believes on Him who places the ungodly in a position of right standing, his faith is likewise credited as righteousness, even as David illustrated this concept when he wrote in the Psalms about the blessedness of the man upon whom God bestows righteousness independent of his own deeds: **Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.**
9 [So, with this concept in mind,] does this blessing of imputed righteousness come only upon those who are circumcised, or does it come upon uncircumcised men as well? Remember, we have shown that faith [--and not circumcision and Torah observance--] was the basis upon which *Abraham* was reckoned to be righteous by God.
10 And when did this reckoning by God occur? After Abraham was circumcised? Or before? The answer is: before!
11-12 And he received the sign of circumcision as a stamp of acknowledgment and approval on the righteousness he already had when he was uncircumcised. It was done that way so that Abraham could be appointed both the father of all those *with* faith--even if they are uncircumcised--so that they could be credited with the same righteousness he had, while at the same time he would also be the father of circumcision to all those who *are* physically circumcised, but yet follow in the footsteps of faith that he, himself, had when *he* was still uncircumcised.
13 For the promise that Abraham would inherit the earth was not made to him or his seed through the Torah [which came much later], but was made on the basis of the righteousness obtained through faith.
14 And if those who are his heirs inherit through the Torah, then faith is rendered void, and the promise made to Abraham is nullified.
15 This is unavoidable, because the Torah can only place men in the position to inherit God's wrath [due to man's imperfection]. Thus, only where there is no binding Torah to be observed in the first place can there be no transgressions of it.
16-17 Therefore, the promise is received through faith that it might be given through grace, so that all the heirs can be certain of obtaining the inheritance--and not just those heirs who know the Torah, but also those outside of it with faith like Abraham, who is father to us all because he, himself, believed God, who gives life to the dead and declares things which are not seen yet as if they were already here. That is why the Scripture says about him: **I have made thee a father of *many nations***.
18 Thus, Abraham believed against all hope that he would become the father of many nations based on what God had said: [*As the stars in the sky,*] *so shall thy seed be*.
19 Not being the sort of man with weak, superficial faith, he ignored the fact that his body was now impotent--since he was about a hundred years old--and he did not consider the fact that Sarah had gone through menopause.
20-21 Abraham did not weaken his faith by debating in his mind whether or how what God had promised would happen, but through faith he became strong, gave glory to God, and believed, being fully persuaded that God was able to do what He had promised to do.
22 This belief was thus, "**imputed to him for righteousness**."
23 Now the words, "**it was imputed to him**" were not meant only for Abraham.
24-25 But that was also written to and about *us*, who will receive the same imputed righteousness if *we* believe on [God] who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was given over to death for our offenses, and then raised again for our justification!

ROMANS CHAPTER 5

1 Therefore, being placed in a state of right standing with God through our faith, we have obtained peace with God [and averted our justly-deserved punishment] through our Lord Jesus Christ,
2 By whom we also--again through faith--have access to the grace by which we stand and rejoice in confidence of someday knowing God's glory.
3 Not only do we look forward to that, but while we wait, we shout for joy in the trials we endure, understanding that those trials help develop our persistence.
4 Persistence, meanwhile, molds character, and character develops confidence.
5 And our confidence is not for nothing, because the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us, has poured out God's love in our hearts.
6 For when we all were still powerless [and trapped in our sins], at the precise time God appointed, Christ died on behalf of the ungodly.
7 It's hard enough to find someone willing to lay his life down for a righteous man, though it's possible that someone would be willing to die for a good man.
8 But God displayed His love for us in that Christ died for all of us while we were still *sinners*!
9 And now that we are placed in right standing with God through Christ's blood, we will much more be protected from God's coming wrath through Christ.
10 For if, when we were still in the position of being enemies of God, we were reconciled to God by His son's death, now that we are in that state of reconciliation, we shall be saved [from wrath] by the fact that Christ is alive.
11 Not only do we enjoy this benefit, but we can also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the agent of our atonement.
12 Thus, as sin entered the world, bringing death with it because of one man [--Adam--] so death is the natural inheritance of all men descended from him, for all have sinned.
13 For until the Torah came, there was indeed sin in the world. However, sin is not credited to man's account where there is no Torah.
14 Even so, death ruled from Adam down to Moses, even over those who had not committed the same sort of transgression as Adam, who prefigured [Christ] who was to come.

15 But there is no comparison between what Adam passed down to his descendants, and the free gift [that Christ bequeaths to us]. For if death came to many through one man's sin, look how much greater the effect of God's grace has had, coming to so many--in such abundance--through one man, Jesus Christ.
16 There is also no comparison between the free gift and the offense of the one man. For judgment, resulting in condemnation, came through the one man, but the free gift [from the other man] restored right standing despite the many offenses.
17 For if--by and through one man's sin of offence--death reigned as king, much more shall they who receive the abundance of God's grace, and the gift of righteousness, have *life* reign in them through another man [and his *righteousness*], Jesus Christ!
18 And therefore, as by the sin of one man, judgment to condemnation came to all men, even so by the *righteousness* of one man--Jesus Christ--the free gift came upon all men, giving them right standing in God's eyes, and life with that!
19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of another man shall many be made righteous.
20-21 Moreover, the Torah came in and amplified the point and problem [by defining sin and causing our sin nature to manifest itself more clearly]. But where sin was in abundance, the abundance of God's grace exploded by comparison, so that--as sin has reigned over mankind and resulted in death--even so, grace would eventually rule through righteousness and lead to eternal life through another man, Jesus Christ our Lord.

ROMANS CHAPTER 6

1 So what should we conclude then--that we should feel free to commit sin so that God's grace can abound toward us?
2 God forbid! How shall we, who are dead to sin, live in sin any longer?
3 Do you not realize that the many of us, who were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death?
4 Therefore, we were buried with him through baptism, representing his death, that we should arise to walk in newness of life just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father.
5 For if we have been grafted together with him and experienced his death, we shall also likewise experience resurrection as he did,
6 Knowing that our old man has been crucified with him in order that our body of sin may be destroyed [along with its propensity to sin], so we might thereafter be freed from serving sin.
7 For he who is dead is freed from sin.
8 Now if we are dead with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him one day,
9 Knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, can no longer die, for death has no power or authority over him.
10 For having undergone physical death one time to deal with sin, he has triumphed over it and now, being alive, he [forever] lives in, with, and to God.
11 In the same way then, consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.
12 Therefore, don't let your sin nature rule over your mortal body and drive you to obey its desires.
13 Neither should you yield any part of your body as a tool of unrighteousness, giving into sin--but yield your will to God as someone who is alive from the dead should; and yield every part of your body to be a tool of righteousness to God.
14 For *sin* shall no longer have control over you, seeing you are not under the Torah [and thus trapped in a cycle of sin], but under [the liberation of] God's grace.
15 But does the fact we are no longer under the Torah, but under grace, mean that we are now permitted to go ahead and commit sinful acts that the Torah said were morally wrong? God forbid!
16 Don't you know that you become the slave of whatever master you give yourself over to listen to, whether it be sin leading to and ending in death, or obedience leading to and ending in righteousness?
17 But thank God that while you *were* once the slaves of sin, you ended that when you obeyed from the heart, and conformed yourselves to the doctrine delivered to you.
18 And being freed from the clutches of sin, you became the [willing] slaves of righteousness.
19 I am using human terms [about slaves serving a master] so you can understand me more easily. My point is that as you formerly yielded your bodies to uncleanness, participating in increasingly debase willful transgression after willful transgression--in like manner, you should now yield your body parts to ever-increasing righteousness leading to holiness.
20 For when you were the slaves of sin, you didn't concern yourself with righteousness.
21 What good fruit was there in any of the things you once did that you are now ashamed of? Those things can only lead to death.
22 But now that you have been made free from sin [and its domination over you], and become servants to God, you now have fruit of the choice you made which leads to holiness, and in the end everlasting life.
23 For the final reward for sinning is death, while God's free gift is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

ROMANS CHAPTER 7

1 Brethren--and I'm talking to the Jews who know the Torah--do you not know that the Torah has authority over a man for as long as he lives [but then its authority over him ends]?
2 For example, a Jewish wife is bound, under the Torah, to reserve herself only to her husband for as long as he is alive. But if that husband dies, she is freed from the responsibility of keeping the various commandments that apply to a married woman.
3 If she were to marry another man while her husband was still alive, for instance, she would be in a state of adultery. But if her husband has died and she becomes free from the obligations that the Torah imposes on her as a married woman, she can marry another man and not be an adulteress.
4 Therefore, my brethren, *you* have become dead, so far as the Torah is concerned, by the body of Christ [who was crucified and died for you to free you from the Torah's authority over you], so that, *you* could marry another husband: the same Jesus who was then raised from the dead, so that we can all bring forth fruit unto God.
5 For [before Christ freed us,] when we were still living in a fleshly, sinful manner, the sinful desires aroused and amplified within us through the power of the Torah impelled our flesh to commit sinful actions to bring forth fruit resulting in death.
6 But we have been delivered from [the power and authority of] the Torah, so that now we are considered dead through and to that which bound us. Thus, we can now serve with a whole new attitude: Not one born from slavish obedience to written commandments, but in the new life of the Spirit.
7 But am I saying that the Torah is sinful? God forbid! For had it not been for the Torah, I would not have realized what sin was [or the depth of sin inside of me]. I would never have known, for instance, my own sense of covetousness and greed had the Torah not said: **Thou shalt not covet**.
8 But the sin hiding inside of me [that I didn't even realize was there otherwise], awakened and came to life from the

commandment, and awakened all sorts of impure covetousness in me. For without the Torah, sin is dormant inside of a person [though it is still there, hiding].
9 You see, I was once alive outside of the Torah. But when the commandment [not to covet] was made known to me, sin came to life against it [--empowering my covetous nature--] and thus I died.
10 And the commandment, which was made to teach me what life is, and to lead me *to* life, I found instead only led me into death.
11 For the sin inside of me tricked me by usurping the life meant for me by the commandment, and instead used that life to power its evil effects inside of me, which ultimately caused me to perform the will of sin--and this slew me.
12 And so I want you to know that the Torah itself is holy, and its commandments holy too, just as they are also just, and good.
13 But did the Torah, which is good, function as something *intended* to kill me? [Or am I somehow denouncing the Torah?] God forbid, no! [It's *me* I am denouncing, while *extolling* the Torah!] You see, sin--so that it could be seen for what it is--used that which was a good thing to power its deadly effects and through the commandment cause what was inside of me to come to the surface to be seen so clearly I could not possibly mistake it!
14 For we know that the Torah is spiritual. But I am carnal, and sold to be the slave of sin.
15 I am reminded of this every time I inexplicably find myself unable to do what I know to be right, but instead doing what I hate and know to be wrong!
16 If then I keep doing what I know is wrong and don't want to do [no matter how much I hate it, and no matter how much my conscience convicts me,] I give my affirmation that the Torah itself is good [while I am the one who is bad].
17 But it is not the true Paul who commits sin, but the sin inside of Paul's flesh [that drives him to commit sin].
18 For I know that inside of my flesh there is nothing good whatsoever. For the desire to do good is in my mind, but my body fights me every step of the way, and I don't know how to do good in such a way that both my body and spirit are in full agreement with it.
19 For the good I would like to do, I all too often do not do, but the evil I don't want to do? Well, all too often I do *that*!
20 Now if I do precisely what I don't want to do, it is no longer the true Paul who does that, but the sin still living inside of Paul's flesh.
21 So I find that there is an unbreakable principle at work that when I would want to do good, there is a part of me that is still evil, which wants to oppose that and do something else.
22 For in the deepest parts of me, I delight in God's Torah.
23 But I see an entirely opposite sort of Torah engrafted into the limbs of my flesh, at war with what I purpose in my mind to do, and it drags me into bondage to the law of sin that lives inside of my physical body.
24 O wretched man that I am! Who can deliver me from this dead body that I am chained to and unable to be freed from?
25 And so I thank God that He will through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then with my mind I serve the Torah of God, yet with my flesh I still serve the opposite Torah of sin.

ROMANS CHAPTER 8

1 Therefore, there is no longer any condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus [who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit].
1 [*Alternate reading--Syrian*]: Therefore, there is no longer any condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus [who, in the flesh, walk after the Spirit].
2 For the Torah of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has enabled me to become free from the written Torah and the unending sequence of sin and death [that it causes in me].
3 For what the Torah could not do, because its power was frustrated and perverted by the weakness of my own flesh, God--by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to deal with sin--condemned sin in the flesh,
4 So that the righteousness of the Torah might be fulfilled inside of us who walk not according to the flesh, but of the Spirit.
5 For they who are of the flesh concern themselves with the carnal longings of the flesh, but they who are of the Spirit concern themselves with the things of the Spirit.
6 You see, to be natural-minded is death, while to be spiritually-minded is life and peace.
7 For the natural mind is in opposition to God since it does not subject itself to the Torah of God, neither can it.
8 So then, they who are in the flesh [--that is, in an unregenerate state, as evidenced by their rebellious thinking and behavior--] cannot please God in any way.
9 But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if it so be that the Spirit of God lives inside of you. Now if any man does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not one of Christ's!
10 And if Christ be in you [through the Spirit], your physical body is dead as a result of sin, but your own spirit shall not die with it, but rather will live because of his righteousness.
11 So if the Spirit of God, who raised up Jesus from the dead, lives inside of you, He who raised up Christ from the dead shall also make your mortal bodies live again by His Spirit, who dwells in you.
12 Therefore, brethren, we are obligated not to the flesh, to live in the manner of the flesh.
13 For if you live after the manner of the flesh, you will truly die. But if you, through the [power of] the Holy Spirit, put to death the evil lusts of your body, you will find true life.
14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God.
15 Remember you have not received the spirit of bondage [to mandatory Torah observance] once again so you can live in fear [over your sins]; but you have received the Spirit of adoption that allows us to cry out the word "Daddy!" to God.
16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.
17 And if we are children, then we are heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, assuming we suffer with him so that both he and us can be glorified together.
18 Thus, I reason that the sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us.
19 For the entire universe eagerly waits for the sons of God to be manifested.
20-21 The whole of creation, you see--against its will--was given over by God to perversion from what it was meant to be so that it would likewise have the same hope of deliverance from its present state, because the universe itself shall also be delivered from the bondage of its corruption into the same glorious liberty of the children of God.
22 For we know that the whole universe groans and suffers in birth pains even up to now.
23 And not only that, but we also, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inside of ourselves, waiting for the completion of our adoption, which is the redemption [and perfecting] of our body.
24 For we were saved in this hope. But a hope that is seen is not hope--for why would a man be in hope for something he can already see?
25 But if we hope for what we do not see yet, then we endure until we receive it.

26. Likewise, the Spirit partners with us in our [lack of understanding], for we don't know what we need to be praying for as we should. But the Spirit Himself makes intercession [for us] with "groanings" beyond words.
27 And God, who searches the hearts, knows what is in the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit makes intercession for the righteous according to the will of God.
28 And we know by experience that all things work together for the ultimate good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose.
29 For those whom God knew from the beginning of time, He also predestined to be conformed into the likeness of His Son, that Christ would be the firstborn among many brothers.
30 Moreover, those God predestined, He also called. And those He called, He also justified. And those He justified, He also glorified.
31 So what should we say then? This: "If God be for us--who can be against us?!"
32 How shall God hold back any [good] things from us, seeing that He spared not His own Son, but was willing to deliver *him* up for us?!
33 So who can make any condemnation of God's elect people [based on their weaknesses and sin] since it is God Himself who justifies them?
34 For who will condemn us, given the fact that Christ died for us--or rather, rose again--and even now is at the right hand of God, pleading our case for us?
35 Who or what shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation? Distress? Persecution? Famine? Nakedness? Peril? Or sword?
36 Remember, it is written: **For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.**
37 But no! In all these things we are more than conquerors through [Christ] who loved us!
38-39 For I am fully persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor demonic powers in the heavens, nor things in the present, nor things that will come, nor [mythical astrological influences], nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord!

ROMANS CHAPTER 9

1 What I am about to say is the truth in Christ, my conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Ghost:
2 I have great heaviness and constant sorrow in my heart.
3 For I could even wish that I were accursed from Christ for my brother Jews,
4 All of whom are Israelites--and the people adopted by God; who were the ones who saw God's glory [on Mt. Sinai and upon the tabernacle]; who received the covenants and the Torah; who had the honor of ministering to God as priests; who were the ones in line to inherit God's promises;
5 Who are descended from the Patriarchs; and from whom, so far as physical descent goes, Christ came, who is preeminent over all things--God--blessed forever! Amen.
6 [Now despite their current situation,] this does not mean that the decree of God has somehow failed to come to pass. You see, not everyone in the physical family of Israel is considered by God to actually *be* a part of Israel.
7 Neither does mere physical descent from Abraham make them all true children of Abraham. Remember the Scripture: **In *Isaac* shall thy seed be called.**
8 This meant that the children that came from Abraham's human efforts at procreation [--Ishmael, and those descended from him--] were not deemed to be the children God promised. Instead, the children that came out of *Isaac*, the child of promise, are the ones God acknowledges as the children.
9 For this was the promise in question: **At this time will I come, and Sara shall have a son.**
10 Not only this, but the principle was again shown when Rebecca conceived [her own child of promise] by our ancestor Isaac.
11 For before her children were even born, and before either had done anything good or bad, that the plan of God--independent of deeds, but through sovereign election alone on the part of Him who issued the call--might be accomplished,
12 It was told her, "The older child shall serve the younger one."
13 As it is written: **Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated**.
14 What shall we say then? That God is unfair? God forbid, no!
15 For God told Moses: **I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.**
16 So then, it is not a question of he who wants [the blessing], or of he who runs [in order to *get* the blessing]. It is a question of to whom God chooses to show mercy.
17 The Scripture also notes this concept elsewhere when it points out that Pharaoh was told: **Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.**
18 Therefore, God will show mercy to whomever He chooses; and He will harden whom He will harden.
19 Now you might say to me, "Well, why does God condemn me if I'm only doing what He forces me to do through His own sovereign will? No one can resist that!"
20 No, sir--who are you to question God? Shall the thing created say to its creator, "Why did you make me like this?"
21 Doesn't the potter have the power to make either a plain bottle or a beautiful vase from the same lump of clay?
22-24 What if God, though wanting and planning to show His wrath, and to make His power known to people, patiently put up with those people destined for His wrath and being perfected for destruction, so that He could make known the riches of His glory on those people He prepared beforehand to receive His *mercy*--even us, whom He has called not just from the Jews, but from the Gentiles too?
25 As He said in Hosea: **I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved**.
26 **And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God.**
27 Isaiah also said, concerning Israel: **Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved:**
28 **For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth.**
29 And Isaiah even said earlier: **Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha.**
30-31 So what shall we say, other than that the Gentiles, who did not seek righteousness, actually found it through faith, while Israel, which followed after the Torah of righteousness, missed the whole point, and never achieved righteousness!
32 Why did they never achieve it, you ask? Because they did not seek it by faith, but instead by their deeds and obedience based on the Torah. You see, they stumbled on the stumbling block that God foretold.
33 As it is written: **Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.**

ROMANS CHAPTER 10

1 [Even so,] brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God is that Israel would [come to the truth, and] be saved.
2 For I admit they have a zeal for God, but a zeal not based on correct knowledge.
3 For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness and going about to counterfeit it by standing on their own Torah observance, have not submitted to the [true] righteousness of God.
4 For Christ is the ultimate personification of all that the Torah points to: the very *source* of righteousness to everyone who places faith in him!
5 For Moses described the righteousness of the *Torah* in this way: **The man which *doeth* those things shall live by them.**
6 But the [true] righteousness that comes from faith speaks this way: **Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven?** [That is, to say: "I will earn heaven through my own righteousness."] This dethrones Christ from his exalted position of Lord and Savior at God's right hand, making him only a favored human man.
7 Nor does it say, **Who shall descend into the deep?** [That is, to say: "I will atone for my own sins in *Sheol*, and *then* enter into eternal life."] This brings Christ up from the grave [negating the truth and power of his resurrection and Lordship, and again making him nothing more than a dead human prophet who must be atoning for his own sins in *Sheol*].
8-9 But what does the attitude of true righteousness say? **The word is nigh thee, *even in thy mouth, and in thy heart***. That is, the "**word**" about *faith* we preach: That if you will 'confess with your mouth,' *Jesus is Lord*, and you shall 'believe in your heart' that God has *raised him from the dead*, you will be saved!
10 For with the heart, man believes and receives righteousness. And with the mouth, confession is made to salvation.
11 For the Scripture says: **Whosoever *believeth* on him shall not be ashamed.**
12 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile--the same Lord of both is rich toward all who call upon Him.
13 For: ***Whosoever* shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.**
14 But how shall people call upon him if they have not believed on him? And how can they believe on him if they have not heard of him? And how can they hear, unless they hear someone preach about him?
15 And how shall anyone preach about him unless they are sent? As it is written: **How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!**
16 But they have not all obeyed the Gospel message, for Isaiah said: *Lord, who has put faith in what we said***?**
17 So then one's faith comes by hearing, and hearing by someone's proclaiming the Message of God.
18 But I ask: Haven't they already heard? Yes, truly they have, for: **Their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.**
19 And I ask: Did Israel, though it heard the message, understand it? For Moses himself said originally: **I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you.**
20 And Isaiah later spoke boldly [about the Gentiles,] saying: **I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me**,
21 While he said about Israel: **All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people**.

ROMANS CHAPTER 11

1 But I ask: Has God cast away His people? God forbid! For I am an Israelite myself, descended from Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.
2 No, God has not cast away His people, whom He foreknew. Do you not remember what the Scripture mentions about an incident in the life of Elijah? How he tried to intercede against Israel, and said to God:
3 **Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life.**
4 But what was God's answer to him? **I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.**
5 So even now, at this present time, there is [--and will always be--] a remnant of Israel in right standing with God, according to His election through His grace.
6 And since it is through grace, it is not of deeds, or else grace would no longer be grace. [Thus, if this remnant exists because of their deeds, then it is not a remnant through God's grace.]
7 So what does this mean, you ask? It means that Israel as a whole did not obtain what it sought for, but the elect [--predestined by God through His grace--] *did* obtain it, and the rest of Israel was blinded.
8 This was in keeping with what was written: **God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear**, even to this day.
9 David also said: **Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling block, and a recompence unto them:**
10 **Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway.**
11 I ask: Have they stumbled because God wanted them to fall altogether? God forbid! But He allowed them to fall so that through their fall, salvation could [legally--without compromising God's unchanging nature--] come to the Gentiles, to provoke Israel itself to jealousy [so the nation would repent].
12 And if their fall has resulted in greatly enriching the rest of the world, and their diminishment has enriched the Gentiles too--how much more will be gained by their eventual fullness [in Christ]?
13-14 My points here have been made especially to you Gentiles since I am the apostle to the Gentiles. As such, I take full advantage of my position and ministry if by some means I may provoke some of my fellow countrymen into jealousy, and thus save some of them.
15 For if Israel's casting away [the Messiah] results in the world being reconciled under him to God--what shall their receiving [of the Messiah] do? Why, it will bring about the resurrection of the dead [and the return of Christ]!
16 For if the firstfruits [of the bread offering] is holy, the entire lump of dough is holy; and similarly, if the root is holy, so are the branches that sprout from it.
17 And if some branches were broken off so you Gentiles, being the same as a wild olive branch, could be grafted onto a cultivated olive tree, and so with the true branches be nourished by the sap of that olive tree,
18 Don't think yourself better than the branches that were broken off. If you do, then remember that you don't uphold the root, but the root upholds you!
19 Now you might say, "The branches were broken off so I could be grafted in."
20 True, because of their *lack* of faith they were broken off, and you stand *by* faith. But don't be proud of that, but fear!
21 For if God didn't spare the natural branches, be careful, lest He not spare you either!

22 So keep in mind both how good God can be, and also how stern. Those who fell away saw how stern He can be. But you see His good side, provided you continue [--through faith--] to abide in that goodness, otherwise you will be cut off too.
23 And they also, if they overcome *their* lack of faith, shall be grafted back in, for God can easily graft them back onto their own olive tree.
24 For if you were taken out of a wild olive tree and grafted onto a cultivated olive tree [--which no one would ever do normally--] how much more will the Jews, who are the natural branches, be grafted back onto their own olive tree?
25 For I don't want you to be ignorant, brethren, about this mystery, lest you become wise through your own arrogance: You see, spiritual blindness has fallen upon the segment of Israel that is not elect, until God has finished bringing all the Gentiles He will call into His kingdom.
26 And so [--with the Gentiles coming in first, and finally the Jews at the end--] all Israel will be saved. For it is written: **There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:**
27 **For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.**
28 Now presently, Israel is your enemy as regards the Gospel. But as regards their role in God's election, they are beloved for the sake of the Patriarchs.
29 For God does not repent of His gifts and calling.
30-32 For as you Gentiles in times past did not believe and obey God, but found mercy through Israel's own unbelief and rebellion, likewise Israel is now in a similar state of unbelief, that through the undeserved mercy shown you, they may obtain the same sort of mercy [when God is ready to deliver them]. For God has caught all Israel up in a similar state of unbelief so that He can [show the exact same mercy toward them as He did the Gentiles, and save them]!
33 How incredible are the depths of God's wisdom and knowledge! How unfathomable are His plans; and how beyond comprehension are His ways of doing things!
34 **For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counseller?**
35 **Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?**
36 For everything comes from Him. Everything exists through Him. And everything is made for Him, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

ROMANS CHAPTER 12

1 Therefore, I beseech you, brethren--because of the mercies of God--to offer up your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, which is logically how to worship and serve Him [as His priests on earth].
2 And don't let the world mold you into *its* image, but be transformed by the renewal of your minds to God's way of thinking. Then you will prove what is the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God.
3 Through the grace given to me, I warn every man among you not to think too highly of himself. Measure yourselves sincerely, each of you as has received a measure of faith from God.
4 For as our bodies have many limbs, and all limbs do not have the same function,
5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and each of us are fellow limbs of that body.
6 And since we have different gifts, according to the grace that has been given to us, let us use them. If we can prophesy, let us do so in proportion to the faith we have been given.
7 If we have a ministry, let us perform that ministry. If we can teach, let us teach.
8 If a man can exhort, he should exhort. If a man can give, let him give out of sincere compassion. If a man has been placed in leadership, let him lead diligently. If a man is in a place to show mercy to another, let him do that cheerfully.
9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor that which is evil, and hold on to what is good.
10 Show affection and love to each other as brothers should: With honor, esteeming everyone else more than himself.
11 Don't be apathetic, but be zealous in serving the Lord.
12 Rejoice in hope. Be patient in tribulation. Be steadfast in praying.
13 Help the poorer brethren. Be known for hospitality.
14 Bless those who persecute you. Bless--don't curse!
15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.
16 Treat everyone equally, and don't regard the rich and influential better than you do the common man. *Don't be wise in your own arrogance.*
17 Don't return evil for evil, but rise above that by living an honest and noble lifestyle in the sight of all men.
18 If it is possible, as much as you are able, live in peace with all men.
19 Dearly beloved, don't be your own judge and jury, and take vengeance for wrongs; leave vengeance to God, for it is written: **Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.**
20 Therefore, *if your enemy hungers, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him water, for in so doing this, you will heap coals of fire upon his head.*
21 Don't let evil overcome *you*, but you overcome evil with good.

ROMANS CHAPTER 13

1 Let every person respect governmental authorities, for no government or earthly authority exists unless God has ordained it, and God puts all governments in power.
2 So whoever resists a representative of the government resists the ordinance of God; and those who resist will receive condemnation.
3 For authorities are not sources of fear for those doing good, but to those doing evil. You don't want to live in fear from government officials, do you? So do good, and be good citizens, and the authorities will praise you.
4 For the local official is, in a sense, the minister of God for your own good. But if you do that which is evil, you should indeed fear, for the ruler doesn't wield the sword in vain--he is a servant of God, a person to take revenge upon someone who does evil.
5 Thus, you should submit to the government, not only for the sake of avoiding its wrath, but also to keep a clear conscience.
6 For this reason you should also pay your national taxes, for the ruling authorities constantly devote themselves to their jobs.
7 So give everyone what is due them: State taxes to whom taxes are due; import fees to whomever collects them; respect to those who are entitled to respect; and honor to those entitled to honor.
8 Be in debt to no man--except to love one another! For he who loves another has fulfilled the Torah.
9 For these commandments: *Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not give false testimony, Do not covet*, along with any other commandments, are all summed up by: **Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.**
10 Love impels a man to do nothing wrong to his neighbor, and so love is the fulfilling of the Torah.
11 Live like this, realizing what times we live in, and that we should rouse ourselves from apathy--for our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.

12 The night is almost over, and the day is starting to dawn. Let us therefore cast off the deeds of darkness, and put on the armor of light.
13 Let us walk uprightly, as men walking in plain sight during the day, rather than walking in partying, drunkenness, sexual promiscuity--thinking "anything goes"--or strife and jealousy.
14 But [fix your attention fully on the example of Jesus Christ], and make no plans to fulfill the lust of the flesh.

ROMANS CHAPTER 14

1 A person who is [less-educated] in the faith than you are should be welcomed, but don't get into disputes over nonessential doctrines that might confuse him and hurt his faith.
2 For one man believes that he can eat anything; but another [with less understanding] thinks he can only eat vegetables.
3 Let he who eats everything not look down on he who restricts his diet; and let not someone who has a restrictive [--or kosher--] diet think himself better than the man who eats everything, for God has received that person.
4 Who are you to judge another person's slave anyway? It's in his master's eyes that he stands or falls--and he shall indeed stand, for God is able to help him stand.
5 One man esteems [the Sabbath and other Holy days] above other days, while another sees every day as the same. Let every man follow his own conscience.
6 He who honors the day, does so to honor God. He who eats, eats to the Lord, and gives God thanks, while he who does not eat certain foods avoids them because of the Lord, and gives God thanks as well.
7 For none of us should be living for himself or dying to himself [but we all should be living for God].
8 For if we live, we live for the Lord. And if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.
9 For this is why Christ died, rose, and revived: So that he could be the Lord of both the dead and the living.
10 So why then do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ [so worry about yourself].
11 Remember what's written: **As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.**
12 So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.
13 Therefore, let us not judge one another anymore. Instead, live so as not to be a stumblingblock or a means of causing another brother to fall.
14 Personally, I have been given to understand by the Lord Jesus that no food is unclean to eat. But if someone still believes it is unclean, then to *that* person it *is* unclean.
15 But if another brother takes issue with the meat you eat, be charitable and don't eat it [in his presence]. Don't cause him, for whom Christ died, to fall into sin over mere food.
16 Then your doing what is actually good to do will not be spoken evil of.
17 Remember, the Messianic Kingdom is not eating and drinking; it is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.
18 For he who serves Christ in righteousness, peace and joy is acceptable to God, and has a good reputation among men.
19 So let us do what produces peace, and which places us in a position to build each other up.
20 Don't destroy the work of God over mere meat. All things are perfectly fine to eat, but it is sinful for a man to eat if his conscience convicts him.
21 It is good not to eat meat, nor drink wine, nor to do anything else that causes your brother to stumble or be made weak.
22 Do you have the understanding in the faith to do certain things that someone else does not? Then have it to yourself before God. Happy is the man who does not condemn himself for doing what he knows is permitted to do.
23 But another man, in a state of doubt, can be condemned if he eats something he thinks is not permitted, because he has not eaten out of his knowledge in the faith. For whatsoever is not done in accordance with one's faith is sin.

ROMANS CHAPTER 15

1-2 So then, we who are strong [--being knowledgeable and mature in the faith--] should be conscious and supportive of newer believers who aren't as developed in *their* knowledge and practice. So let us not just please ourselves, but rather let each of us concern ourselves with doing what's best for our neighbor so he may be built up too.
3 For even Christ pleased not himself, but as it is written: **The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.**
4 For all the things written in ages past in the Old Testament were written for us to learn from so that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, could have hope.
5-6 Now may the God of patience and encouragement enable you all to achieve the same attitude [of love and servanthood] toward each other that Christ Jesus had, that you all--with one mind and mouth--can glorify God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
7 So [you Jews and Gentiles] accept one another as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.
8-9 Now I point out that Jesus Christ was a servant to the circumcised [--the covenant people, the Jews--] fulfilling and showing the truth of God's promises made to the Patriarchs, but also so that the Gentiles so could glorify Him for His mercy, for it is written: **For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name.**
10 And again he said: **Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people.**
11 And again: **Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people.**
12 And Isaiah said: **There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.**
13 Now may the God of hope fill you with all His joy and peace in your faith so that you may be filled with hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.
14 Meanwhile, I am convinced, my brethren, that you are full of goodness, and in possession of everything you need to know, and can admonish one another.
15-16 Even so, brethren, I have been bold to write these things to remind you of what you already know, because of the grace given me by God that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles. My job is to minister the Gospel of God so that my offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable to God through their sanctification on the part of the Holy Spirit.
17 So it is no shame for me to be proud of what Jesus Christ has done through me in my doing the work of God.
18-19 For I will not speak about anything that Christ has not done through me in making the Gentiles obedient to the Gospel in word and deed, displaying mighty signs and wonders by the power of the Spirit of God. So, from Jerusalem to Illyricum [Crete and the Balkans], I have fully preached the Gospel of Christ.
20 Yes indeed, I have made every effort to preach the Gospel in places where Christ's name is unknown, lest I should be building upon the work of some other man.
21 But instead, as it is written: **To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.**

22 Because of my constantly preaching in new areas, I have long had to delay coming to you.
23 But now, having finished my work of evangelism in the region here, and having wanted for many years to come to you,
24 When I depart for Spain, I will come by way of Rome, and I trust to see you on my journey and enjoy some time with you before you help supply me for the journey.
25 But right now, I must go to Jerusalem to deliver the relief fund to the righteous there.
26 For it has pleased the churches in northern and southern Greece to make a contribution for the righteous poor living in Jerusalem.
27 It has truly pleased them to do this since they are certainly in debt to them. For if the Gentiles have been made sharers of the Jews' spiritual blessings, it is their duty to show their thanks by ministering some natural blessings to the Jews in return.
28 So when I have taken care of all this, I will come by you on my way to Spain.
29 And I am sure that when I do come to you, I will [come and minister with signs and wonders] in the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ.
30-32 Now I beseech you, brethren, for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ, and for the love in the Spirit, that you make fervent prayers to God that I will be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea. Also, pray that the relief fund I bring will be accepted by the righteous, so that I may come to you with joy, by the will of God, and be refreshed with you.
33 Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

ROMANS CHAPTER 16

1 I commend to you our sister Phoebe [who is delivering this letter]. She is a servant of the church at Cenchrea.
2 Receive her in the Lord as is proper for the righteous to do, and help her with whatever she needs, for she has been of great assistance to many others, including myself.
3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my associates in Christ Jesus.
4 Both have risked their necks for me, for which *I* not only thank them, but all the Gentile churches as well.
5 Likewise, convey my greetings to the church that meets in their house. Say hello to my very beloved Epaenetus, who was my first convert to Christ in southern Greece.
6 Greet Mary, who worked tirelessly for us.
7 Greet Andronicus and Junia, my relatives, and my fellow prisoners, who are esteemed by the apostles, and who were believers before I was.
8 Greet Amplias my beloved in the Lord.
9 Greet Urbane, our helper in Christ, and my beloved Stachys.
10 Greet Apelles, who is approved of by Christ. Salute those who are of the household of Aristobulus.
11 Salute Herodian, my kinsman. Greet all who are of the household of Narcissus, who are believers in the Lord.
12 Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, who work for the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, who labored much for the Lord.
13 Greet Rufus, who is chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who is like a mother to me as well.
14 Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brothers who are with them.
15 Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and greet Olympas, and all the saints that are with them.
16 Greet one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.
17 One more thing: I beseech you, brethren, take note of those who cause divisions and offenses that are contrary to the doctrine [of unity in Christ, independent of one's background] you were taught, and avoid them.
18 For people like this do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ--they serve their own bellies, and by their cunning words and crafty speeches deceive the simple-minded.
19 Your obedience, by the way, has been brought to the attention of everyone, and I am glad of this for you. You see, I want you to be wise about all that is good, and ignorant about all that is evil.
20 The God of peace, meanwhile, will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.
21 Timothy, my fellow worker, along with Luke, Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, send greetings.
22 I Tertius, who penned this epistle, greet you in the Lord.
23 My current host, Gaius, and the whole church send greetings to you. Erastus, the chamberlain of the city, greets you as does Quartus, a brother.
24 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.
25-27 Now to the only wise God, who can keep you grounded through my Gospel and the preaching regarding Jesus Christ--according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret from the beginning of the world, but now manifested through the Scriptures of the prophets by decree of the everlasting God who made it known to all nations to lead them to the obedience to and from faith--be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.

COLOSSIANS

COLOSSIANS CHAPTER 1

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,
2 To the righteous and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colossae: Grace and peace be to you from God our Father [and the Lord Jesus Christ].
3-5 We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, always keeping you in our prayers since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and the love you have for all the righteous, a love born of your confidence in what is laid up for you in heaven, which you have heard before in the Message of the Gospel truth.
6-7 This Message has come to you, just as it has the rest of the world; and as it has born fruit elsewhere, it has likewise been bearing fruit in you from the day you heard it and came to know grace of God in all truth, as told you by Epaphras, our dear fellow laborer, who is a faithful minister of Christ to you.
8 He is the one who informed us of your love in the Spirit.
9 For this reason we also, since the day we heard of it, have desired and unceasingly prayed that you would be filled with perfect knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding,
10 So that you can walk worthy of the Lord and be pleasing to him, being fruitful in every good work, and growing in the knowledge of God,
11-12 Receiving the power to be strengthened in patience and long-suffering through His might and glorious power, joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has made you worthy to inherit the Light with the righteous ones.
13 The same Father has delivered us from the Power who rules over darkness, and integrated us into the kingdom of His dear Son,
14 Through whose blood we have redemption and the forgiveness of sins.
15 He is the visible reflection of the invisible God, and is pre-eminent over all Creation.
16 For by the Son, all things in heaven and earth--visible and invisible--were created, whether they are earthly thrones or rulers, spirits in charge of whole nations, or spirit beings in the heavens above--all things were created by him for his own pleasure.
17 And the Son existed before all things; and through the Son, all things [continue their existence].
18 And he is the head of the body--the church--and is the genesis and firstborn from the dead so that he may have pre-eminence [over everything in the universe].
19 For it pleased the Father that every possible fullness [and authority] should dwell in him;
20 And, having made peace [between God and man] through the blood of his cross, the Father ordained that all things, whether on earth or in the cosmos, should be reconciled through and to him.
21-23 And you [Gentiles] also, who were once alienated from God in your minds by your wicked deeds, He has reconciled in the body of Christ through his death, to present you holy, guiltless, and beyond reproach in His sight--provided you continue in the faith and remain unmoved from the hope of the Gospel you've heard that was also preached to every creature under heaven; the same Gospel that I, Paul, have been made a minister of.
24 It is because of you that I can rejoice in my sufferings as I employ *my own* body to inherit the work and afflictions Christ began on the cross for the sake of *his* body, the church,
25 To which I have been made a minister, according to the assignment that has been given me for you, to fulfill the decree of God,
26 Which was a mystery that was hidden for ages, through many generations, but now is being manifested to his righteous ones,
27 To whom God would reveal what is the riches and glory of this mystery among the Gentiles--which is Christ in you, the hope of glory,
28 Whom we preach about, warning and teaching every man with all the wisdom we have so that we may present every man mature in Christ Jesus.
29 So I also labor, working diligently in His power that operates mightily through me.

COLOSSIANS CHAPTER 2

1-3 For I would have you be aware of the great conflict that I have undergone for you, and those in Laodicea, and for others as well who have not yet met me personally, so that everyone's hearts may be comforted, being united in love to the point they are enriched with full assurance of understanding of this mystery of God the Father and Christ, in whom is hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.
4 And what I am about to say [in verse 6], I say so that no man tricks you through crafty arguments.
5 For though I am not present in body, I am with you in spirit, rejoicing over how, like good soldiers, you have formed a solid unit, locked your shields together and stand unmoving and united in your faith in Christ.
6 So I say that you should now advance in lockstep according to the knowledge you received about Christ Jesus the Lord.
7 Being rooted and built up in him, and grounded in the faith you were taught, abounding in it with gratitude.
8 But beware, lest any man rob you through philosophy and empty deceit, substituting human tradition born from the world's demon-inspired principles, in favor of the truth of Christ.
9-12 For in Christ alone, all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in bodily form, and you are complete in Christ, the head of all rulers and powers, through whom you are circumcised not with the circumcision performed with human hands on a physical body, but by the [spiritual] circumcision of Christ, which cuts the sins of the flesh from the body [through your being] buried with him in baptism and your being raised with him through your faith in the power of God who raised *him* from the dead.
13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, he has made alive with Christ, having forgiven all your trespasses,
14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances [in the Torah] that were against us, taking them away by nailing them to his cross [and assuming our debt].
15 Then, having looted demonic principalities and powers through the cross as well, he made them a public spectacle of defeat in a triumphal parade.
16 So don't be moved by someone's criticism over what you eat or drink, or whether you observe a [Jewish] Feast day [Sabbath], or a New Moon [Sabbath], or whether you keep the various other Jewish Sabbaths.
17 These are symbolic of things to come, but their personification is in Christ.
18-19 Nor should you let any man rob you of your reward by intimidating you into some obligation to placate angels, intruding into [metaphysical] things he knows nothing about, based on some esoteric revelation or vision he has received from his own intellectual pride and arrogance rather than from the Head--by which the rest of the body is given all it needs to grow, being joined together and growing in the increase of God.

20 So if you have died with Christ and become dead to demon-birthed philosophies and thinking of the world,
why--as if you were still living in the ungodly world--are you obeying worldly religious regulations?
21-22 I mean regulations along the lines of, "Don't touch; don't taste; don't handle" things that are gone as soon as they are [eaten]. It's carnal men who have invented such prohibitions.
23 They have a semblance of wisdom in the sense of conveying self-imposed religious acts, false humility, and self-denial--but they are of no use in bringing about true self-control.

COLOSSIANS CHAPTER 3

1 So if you have arisen with Christ, seek for the things that are above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God.
2 Set your mind on things above, not on things of the earth.
3 For you are dead [to this world], and your life is hidden with Christ in God.
4 And when Christ--who is our life--appears, you shall also appear with him in glory.
5 So put to death everything in your bodily members that is earthy: Fornication, impurity, wild passion, evil desires, and greed--which is a form of idolatry.
6 It's these very things that causes the wrath of God to fall [upon those who refuse to believe the Gospel].
7 You once walked in some of these things when you were still alive to the world.
8 Now banish these things from your mouth as well: Anger, wrath, malice, irreverent speech, and profanity.
9-11 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off the old [earthy] man along with his deeds, and have put on the new man who thinks in an entirely new manner after the pattern of his creator, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian (be he European all the way down to a Scythian), slave or free--but Christ is all, and in all!
9-11 [*Alternate reading*]: Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off the old [earthy] man along with his deeds, and have put on the new man who thinks in an entirely new manner after the pattern of his creator, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, black or white, be one from the same hemisphere or the furthest part of the earth, whether slave or free--but Christ is all, and in all!
12 Holy and beloved brethren: As the elect of God, don heartfelt attitudes of mercy, kindness, humility, meekness and patience,
13 Putting up with each other's faults, and forgiving any that you have quarrels with even as Christ forgave you as an example of the way you should forgive others.
14 And atop all this, clothe yourself with [God's sort of unselfish] love, which binds all these things together in perfection.
15 And let the peace of God rule your hearts, something that the body of Christ is called upon to do. Also, be thankful.
16 Let the Message of Christ live bountifully in you through all the wisdom God has granted. Teach and admonish one another in psalms, hymns, and singing in Tongues, singing in your hearts to the Lord with gratitude.
17 And whatever you do in speech or deed, do it in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.
18 Wives, give place to your husbands as is proper in the Lord.
19 Husbands, love your wives, and don't treat them harshly.
20 Teenagers, obey your parents in all things, for God is very pleased by this.
21 Fathers, don't provoke your children to anger, lest you break their spirit.
22 Slaves, obey in every way your earthly masters. Don't do so just when you're being watched--in the way that men-pleasers do--but in heartfelt sincerity, honoring God.
23 And whatever you do, do it well, as if you are doing it for the Lord, rather than for men,
24 Knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of inheritance, for you serve the Lord Christ.
25 But he who does wrong shall be punished for the wrong he has done, as there is no partiality with God.

COLOSSIANS CHAPTER 4

1 Masters, give to your slaves that which is right and fair [--proper food, clothing, and treatment--] knowing that you too are a slave with a Master in heaven.
2 Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert and in an attitude of thanksgiving.
3-4 And pray that God would open a door of utterance for us to proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains even now, that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.
5 Treat unbelievers outside the Community wisely, and make the most of the time you have with them.
6 Let your speech always display grace, seasoned with the salt [of wisdom, tact, and edification], that you may know how to answer every man.
7 Tychicus will give you a report on how I am doing. He is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellow slave in the Lord.
8 I have sent him on to you for the same reason: To see how you are getting along, and to comfort your hearts.
9 I have also sent Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother who is one of your fellow Colossians. They will bring you up to date on all the news from this part of the world.
10 Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends greetings as does Mark--Barnabas' sister's son--about whom you were already given instructions about. Receive him if he comes to you.
11 And Jesus, who is called Justus, greets you as well. These men are the only Jews working with me to advance the Kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me.
12 Epaphras, another of your fellow Colossians and slave of Christ, sends greetings. He is ever praying intensely that you will stand mature and complete in God's will.
13 I can attest to the fact that he has a great zeal for you, those in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis.
14 Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas send greetings.
15 Convey my best to the brethren in Laodicea including Nymphas and the church that meets in her house.
16 When this letter is read to you, make sure it is also read in the church at Laodicea; and likewise, you should read the letter I sent to them.
17 Say to Archippus: "Be sure that you heed the ministry to which God has called you, that you may fulfill it."
18 THE SALUTATION BY MY OWN HAND, PAUL.
REMEMBER MY CHAINS. GRACE BE WITH YOU. AMEN.

Marcus Sestius Philemon

PHILEMON CHAPTER 1

1 Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, to my dearly beloved Philemon, our fellow laborer;
2 And our beloved Apphia and Archippus, our fellow soldier, and to the church that meets in your house:
3 Grace and peace to you, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.
4 I thank my God, always making mention of all of you in my prayers,
5 Having heard of your love and faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and all the righteous;
6 So that the sharing of your faith will be sparked into action when you understand all the good things we can do in Christ Jesus.
7 For we have great joy and comfort in your love because the souls of the righteous are refreshed by you, brother.
8 Therefore, though I could ask a request upon you because of my rank in Christ,
9 Yet for the sake of our love for each other, I instead beg you as nothing more than Paul, the old man, who is now in prison for Jesus Christ.
10 I am asking you for the sake of my son Onesimus, whose father I became in prison.
11 In time past with you, he did not live up to his name [--which means “profitable”]. But now, he is that both to you and to me.
12 I have sent him back to you [with this letter]. Receive him, and you will be receiving my own heart.
13 I would love to have kept him here, that in your place he could assist me while I am in chains for the Gospel.
14 But without your permission, I would not do so; and I didn’t want to constrain you to do this, but I hoped it would be with your consent.
15 For perhaps Onesimus left you for a while, that you could have him back forever,
16 Not as a slave, but more than a slave--a brother who is beloved, especially to me. And how much more should he be beloved to you, both in a natural sense, and in the Lord?
17 If you consider me your partner in the Gospel, receive him as you would me.
18 If he has wronged you or owes you anything, charge it to my account.
19 I, Paul, writing with my own hand, agree to repay whatever he owes you--though I won’t remind you of how you even owe your very soul to *me*!
20 Yes, brother, give me cause to rejoice in the Lord--refresh my heart in the Lord.
21 Having confidence in what I knew you would do, I wrote this to you, knowing you’ll go beyond what I have asked [and will give him his freedom altogether].
22 Keep a bed made up for me, for I believe, through your prayers, I shall gain my freedom and come visit you.
23 Those who send greetings apart from me include Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus,
24 Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow laborers.
25 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

Ephesians

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 1

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the righteous and faithful in Christ Jesus [at Ephesus].
2 Grace and peace be to you from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.
3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all the heavenly blessings of the Spirit through Christ.
4 For in His love, He chose us to be in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and unblemished before Him.
5-9 By His will, and for His own pleasure, God predestined us to be adopted children through Jesus Christ, to the praise of the glory of His grace, through which he has made us incalculably favored in the beloved Son, through whose blood we have redemption and the forgiveness of our sins according to the riches of God's grace that He dispensed toward us in all wisdom and understanding, having revealed the mystery of His will that came about through the merciful decision that He made.
10 And that mystery was, that when the right time came, He would reconcile, and place under authority, all things in the heavens and on the earth through and to Christ.
11-12 And, in Christ, we also have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to God's own plans--which He brings to pass as He wills--that we, who first trusted in Christ, should be to the praise of His glory.
13-14 You trusted in him too, after you heard the message of truth about the "Good news" of salvation in Christ, who sealed you with the promised Holy Spirit after you believed, who is the down payment of our inheritance until we receive the full possession of what has been promised, to the praise of God's glory.
15-16 For this reason also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and the love you have for all of the righteous, have not ceased to mention and give thanks for you in my prayers,
17 Asking the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, to give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of [Christ],
18 So that the eyes of your understanding will be opened to comprehend the hope of His calling, and the incalculable riches of glory the righteous will inherit,
19 And to comprehend the incredible might of His awesome power toward us who believe.
20-21 It's the same power that God used in Christ when He raised him from the dead and sat him down on a throne at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every title of authority that exists--not only in this age, but also in the [Messianic] Age that is to come.
22 And God put all things under his feet, and exalted him, who is head of all things, to be the head all things for the church,
23 Which is his body and the full visible expression of him who fills everything in the universe [with his presence].

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 2

1 And you, who were once dead in trespasses and sins, he has made alive.
2 For in time past, you walked according to the ways of the unsaved world, in the patterns established by the Prince of the Power of the Air, the spirit force working through his rebellious, unbelieving sons [in opposition to we sons of faith who operate under the Holy Spirit].
3 We all, at one time, were like them in our various lifestyles, giving in to the wrong desires of our flesh and unregenerate minds. In fact, we [Jews] were naturally in the position of being children of wrath, just as others today are.
4-7 But God--who is rich in mercy--because of the great love He had for us even when we were hopelessly dead in sin, brought us to life as He did Christ, saving us by grace, resurrecting us, and enthroning us with him in heavenly places so that in ages to come He might point to us as the example of the unlimited riches of the grace He had for us in Christ Jesus.
8 For it is *by* that grace that you are saved, through your faith--and even that faith doesn't really come from yourself; it too is the gift of God.
9 Yes, salvation is not based on anything one can do, in order that no man can boast.
10 For we are the poem God is writing in Christ Jesus, leaving behind an epic of good works that He ordained for us to walk in from the beginning.
11 Recall then, that once you were Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by those called the "Circumcision" based on a physical operation done by human hands.
12 At that time you were outside of Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and thus strangers excluded from the covenants of promise--with no hope, and walking through life without God.
13 But now in Christ Jesus, you who were sometimes *very* far off, have been brought near by the blood of Christ!
14 For he is our peace [offering], who has made both Jew and Gentile to be one, and who by this has broken down the "middle wall of partition" separating the Gentiles and the Jews,
15 Having abolished in his body that which [ultimately] divided us: the Torah, along with its commandments contained in decrees [of separation], so that he could take two people and make them into one people, thus making "*shalom*" [peace],
16 Reconciling both to God in one body through the cross, killing off the enmity [between Jew and Gentile and man and Him] through it.
17 And Christ came and **preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh**.
18 For through Christ, both Jew and Gentile have access by one Holy Spirit to the Father.
19 And so now you Gentiles are no longer *strangers and foreigners*, but fellow citizens with the righteous [Jews], and are now part of the household of God [with them].
20-22 You likewise are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets--with Jesus Christ as the chief cornerstone--through whom the entire building is being fitted together and being built up as a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you are also being built up together as a habitation of God through the Holy Spirit.

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 3

1 [Because of preaching this Gospel of inclusion, and the revelation that both Jew and Gentile have equal acceptability to, and equal access by, one Spirit to the Father,] this is why I, Paul, am a prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles.
2 You have heard of the dispensation of grace God gave me for you.
3 As you know from my earlier, but brief, epistle--it was by supernatural revelation that He revealed the mystery I just mentioned.
4 When you read it, you may get an equal grasp of the knowledge I have regarding this mystery in Christ,
5 That in earlier times was not known by humanity unlike now, since it has been revealed to Christ's holy apostles and prophets by the Holy Spirit,

6 That mystery being that the Gentiles would be equal heirs [with the Jews], parts of the same body, and equal partakers of God's promise in Christ through the Gospel.
7 It was for this Gospel that I was made a servant through the gift of grace God gave to me by the effectual working of His mighty power.
8 Yes, to me--who am lower than the least of all the righteous--has the grace been given to have the privilege of preaching to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;
9 And to make all men see their opportunity and part in this mystery that, from the beginning of the world, has been hidden with God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.
10 He did this so that the demonic overlords and their minions in the heavens might now see the manifold wisdom of God through the church,
11 Which was precisely His eternal plan he implemented in Christ Jesus our Lord,
12 In whom we boldly and confidently draw near [to God], by faith in him.
13 This is why I don't want you to be intimidated at the tribulations for you that I undergo for your glory.
14-19 For this reason I bend my knees before the Father [of our Lord Jesus Christ]--the ultimate progenitor of all fathers and fatherhood in heaven and on earth [who appointed all beings to their places of authority and habitation]--asking Him to grant you, through the riches of His glory, to be mightily strengthened by His Spirit in your inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; so you, being rooted and grounded in His love, may be able to understand and know, with all the righteous, the breadth, length, depth, and height of the love of Christ, which is beyond human understanding; and that you might be filled with all the fullness of God.
20 Now to God, who is able to do exceedingly and abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to His power that works in us,
21 To Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, forever and ever. Amen.

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 4

1 As the prisoner of the Lord, I thus beg you to walk worthily in the sort of lifestyle to which you were called,
2 With an attitude of humility and patience, bearing with one another in love,
3 And doing all you can to stay in the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
4 [You see, everything is meant to function in perfect unity.] There is one body, and one Spirit, even as you are called in the same single hope of your calling.
5 There is one Lord, the faith, and a single baptism [into Christ].
6 There is one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.
7 But every one of us is given a dispensation of grace as Christ chooses to dole his gift out.
8 This is why it is said about him: **When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men**.
9 Now since he *ascended*, it is clear that he beforehand *descended* into the bowels of Hades within the earth.
10 He who descended is also the same one who ascended far above sky and space, so that he might fill [and have authority over] absolutely everything.
11 And the "**gifts**" he gave was to leave some to be apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some as pastors who are able to teach those under them.
12-13 He left these behind for the perfecting of the righteous, and for the work of the ministry, and for the building up of the body of Christ, until we all come to perfect unity in the faith and knowledge of the son of God, to a mature man grown complete in the fullness of Christ.
14 Thus, we will no longer be as children, tossed this way and that, and blown about by every different wave of doctrine on the part of dishonest men and their cunning craftiness who lie in wait to deceive us.
15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow up to be like Christ, our head, in all ways.
16 For it is Christ from whom the whole body is perfectly joined together by what every joint supplies according to the way each is designed to function, helping the body overall to build itself up in perfected love.
17 And so I say this, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as other Gentiles do, according their own vain logic born from unregenerate minds,
18 Having their understanding darkened because they are alienated from the life of God through their closed-minded ignorance because of the spiritual blindness of their heart.
19 These, no longer having a conscience to convict them, have given themselves over to immorality, and now zealously pursue all sorts of uncleanness.
20 But you have not learned these sorts of things through Christ.
21-24 Assuming you *have* heard what he teaches, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus, put off, as concerns your old lifestyle, the old man, which is corrupt with deceitful urges; and instead adopt a completely different mindset, putting on the new man, which, in God's image, is created to live in righteousness and true holiness.
25 So put away lying, and **speak every man truth with his neighbour**, for we are all body parts together.
26 **Be ye angry, and sin not**. Don't let the sun go down before you have put your anger away,
27 Nor give the devil a stronghold over you.
28 Let he who was a thief no longer steal. Instead, let him get a job and put his hands to work at honest labor, that he may have something to give the less fortunate.
29 Let no profane, demeaning, or unedifying words come out of your mouth. Instead, speak that which is edifying, so that it will minister grace [and build up those who hear you].
30 Don't sadden the Holy Spirit of God, who has sealed you until the Day of Redemption:
31 Cast away all bitterness, wrath, anger, shouting, slander, and malice,
32 And be kind to one another. Be tenderhearted, forgiving one another even as God, in Christ, has forgiven you.

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 5

1 Follow God's ways as dear children of His should.
2 And walk in [selfless] love just as Christ also loved and gave himself up for us as an offering and sacrifice, a delightful aroma to God.
3 But let not sexual sin, uncleanness, or greed be seen in any form among you as this unacceptable for the righteous.
4 Neither let obscene, foolish, or profane talk escape your lips, for this is not acceptable either. Instead, let your mouth be filled with thanksgiving.
5 You can be sure of this: No one who sleeps with prostitutes, nor those who are impure, nor those who are greedy--which is idolatry--has any share in the inheritance of the Kingdom of Christ, and God.
6 Let no man deceive you [into thinking these things are acceptable] with crafty arguments, for it is because of sins like these that the wrath of God is going to fall on the children of those who refuse to believe the Gospel.

7 So do not be persuaded by such lies and become co-conspirators with people who do these things.
8 For there were times in your past when you were children of darkness. But now you are lights in the Lord, so walk as children of light.
9 Remember the fruit of light is found in all goodness, righteousness, and truth,
10 Which proclaim what is acceptable to the Lord.
11 And have no friendship with the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead speak out against them.
12 For it's shameful to even talk about the impure acts people commit in secret.
13 But such wrongdoing becomes seen for what it is when it is exposed to the light, and the light shows things as they really are.
14 This is why it is said: *Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead*--and Christ shall give you light.
15 So be careful about what sort of lifestyle you have, not living like fools, but as wise men,
16 Making the most of the time you have on earth, because these are evil days that we live in.
17 So don't be airheads, but instead understand what the will of the Lord is.
18-20 *Don't get drunk with wine*, which leads to ungodliness; but keep being filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms, hymns, and singing in Tongues, singing and making melodies in your hearts to the Lord. Also, make sure, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to also give thanks to God the Father at all times and in every circumstance.
21 And give place to one another out of reverence for God.
22 Wives, give place to your husbands as you would the Lord.
23 For the husband is the head of the wife, just as Christ is head of the church; and he is the savior of the body.
24 Therefore, as the church yields to, and obeys Christ, so wives should do likewise with their husbands in everything.
25-27 Meanwhile, husbands, you should love your wives with the same [selfless, sacrificial] love Christ had toward the church that he gave himself for, that he might set it apart and cleanse it through a washing imparted by the Message, so that he might present it to himself as a glorious church with no disqualifying spots, wrinkles, or anything similar, that it might be holy and unblemished [as a sacrificial offering should be].
28 In the same way, husbands should love their wives as much as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife, loves himself.
29 For no man ever hated his own flesh body; but he nourishes and takes care of it even as the Lord does the church.
30 For we are members of his body--his flesh, and his bones.
31 **For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.**
32 This is a great mystery, but I'm speaking of the relationship between Christ and the church.
33 Nevertheless, let every one of you make a special point of loving his wife as he does himself; and let the wife see to it that she reverences her husband.

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 6

1 Teenagers, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is proper.
2 **Honour thy father and mother.** This is the first commandment with a promise:
3 **That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.**
4 Meanwhile, fathers, don't treat your children in such a way that you [needlessly] provoke them to wrath. Instead, bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.
5 Slaves, obey those who are your earthly masters with fear and trembling; and do so sincerely, as you would Christ.
6-7 Don't do it only when you're being watched, like men-pleasers. But do so as slaves of Christ, performing the will of God from the heart, displaying efficiency and a good attitude as if you were doing this for the Lord, rather than men.
8 For you know that any good thing a man does, the same shall receive a reward from God whether he is a slave or free.
9 You masters do likewise! Don't threaten and mistreat your slaves, for you have the same Master in heaven, who does not show partiality.
10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.
11 [The church should] put on the whole armor of God that you all may be able to withstand the tricks of the devil.
12 For our battle is not against people, but with the spirits *behind* the people: Demonic principalities and Powers [who carry out Satan's will] that rule over the darkness of this world, and various other wicked spirits in the heavens.
13 Thus, you should take up the whole armor of God, that you all might be able to withstand in the evil day; and having done all, stay on your feet.
14 Stand therefore, having your loins clothed with truth, and wearing the breastplate of righteousness [which is faith and love];
15 And on your feet, the spiked shoes of readiness to march out and proclaim the "Good News" of peace [with God] at a moment's notice.
16 And above all, you should use the shield of faith to extinguish every fire arrow of the [devil].
17-18 Keep on the helmet of your salvation [as the protector of your thoughts], and wield the sword of the Spirit--which are the things God has spoken--as you always pray and entreat God through the use of Spiritual language. Persevere in watching and entreating God for all the righteous.
19 Pray also that God would give me words and courage to open my mouth and boldly proclaim the mystery of the Gospel,
20 For which, as an ambassador, I am in chains. Pray that I might speak boldly as I should.
21 So that you can know of all that is going on, and how I am doing, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister of the Lord, will bring you up to speed.
22 I sent him to you for that very purpose, that you might know what is going on with us; and that he might comfort your hearts.
23 Peace to the brethren, and love and faith, from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.
24 Grace be with all those who sincerely love our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

PHILIPPIANS

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER 1

1 Paul and Timothy, the slaves of Jesus Christ, to all the righteous in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with its bishops and deacons.
2 Grace and peace be to you from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.
3-5 I thank my God every time you come to mind, always praying joyfully for you, in every prayer I make, because of the way you partnered with me in the Gospel from the first day you heard it until now.
6 And I am confident of this very thing: That He who began a good work in you will continue it until He completes it in the Day of Jesus Christ!
7 It's only right for me to think this way because you are all in my heart since you have been partakers of my grace both in my bonds and in the defense and confirmation of the Gospel.
8 For God bears me witness how much I long for you with the tenderness of Jesus Christ himself.
9-11 And I pray that your love will abound, increasing in all knowledge and discernment, so that from now, until the Day of Christ, you may prize the things of *true* value, and thus be sincere and without offense, being filled with the fruits of righteousness that are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.
12-13 But I want you to understand, brethren, that the things that have befallen me have ultimately happened for the promotion of the Gospel, so that the reason for my being chained in Christ's name has been made known throughout all the Praetorian camp, and everywhere else.
14 Thus, many other brethren in the Lord, being confident by my chains, are made all the more bold to speak the Message without fear.
15 Some indeed preach Christ out of envy and strife, but others preach him out of good will.
16 The former preach Christ out of contention, not in sincerity, thinking to add to the suffering of my imprisonment.
17 The latter do so out of love, knowing I am holding strong my position at the front lines of battle to defend the Gospel.
18 But what does it matter? Either way, whether in pretense or in truth, people are being preached to about Christ; and in that I rejoice, and will continue to rejoice.
19-20 For I know that all this shall be for my ultimate delivery through your prayers and the strength of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, just as I believe and have confidence in. So in no way will I be intimidated, but instead--as I have always done--I will go on boldly so that Christ, as always, will be glorified in my body whether it be through my life or by my death.
21 For me to live, is [to live for] Christ; and to die is gain [for me personally].
22 But if I continue to live this mortal life, it is only to produce fruit in the Gospel. But which is better: To live or to die? That, I'm not sure of.
23 For I am torn between the two, having a desire to be loosed from this world and be with Christ, which is far better than remaining here.
24 But for me to stay here is better for you.
25-26 I am certain of that, so I will remain here and continue on with you for your development and joy of faith so that your rejoicing in Jesus Christ may be even greater by my coming to you again.
27-28 Until then, just let your lifestyle be one that is appropriate for followers of the Gospel of Christ, so that whether I see you in person, or else hear from others while I am absent, I can rely on the fact that you stand firm in one spirit and mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel without fearing your adversaries. This will be to them a testimony and sign to them of their coming perdition, but to you it will be a sign of your coming salvation, which is from God.
29 For to you has been given, on behalf of Christ, the honor of not only believing in him, but also to suffer for his sake,
30 Fighting the same battle yourselves that you have seen me fight, and hear that I fight even now.

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER 2

1 So if there is any encouragement in Christ...
If any comfort in his love...
If any fellowship of the Spirit...
If there are any bowels of compassion in you--
2 Then maximize my joy by all of you pursuing the same goals with the same sort of love, in one accord and with one mind.
3 Let nothing be done through strife or self-aggrandizement, but with an attitude of humility, let each one esteem his brother as better than himself.
4 Don't just worry about your own good--concern yourselves with the problems your brothers are going through as well.
5 Have the same sort of attitude [--that of a servant--] that Christ Jesus had.
6-7 Though existing in the form of God, and not considering it to be usurping anything to be equal with God the Father, he made himself insignificant, and took the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of a mortal man.
6-7 [*Alternate reading*]: Though existing in the form of God, he did not consider that form something to remain in, but instead made himself insignificant and took the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of a mortal man.
8 And being found in the form of a mere man, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death on the cross.
9-11 Because of [his willingness to humble himself, and take on the lowly nature of humanity in order to experience death for us,] God has highly exalted him, and given him a name [and rank] that is above every other so that at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow, whether that of beings in heaven, on earth, or in the realm of the dead; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
12-13 So, my beloved brethren, as you have obeyed before--not just when I was there, but even more zealously in my absence--work to develop the full fruit of your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who energizes you to perform the good things He wants you to do.
14-16 Do everything without grumbling and arguing, that you may be blameless and innocent, and sons of God against whom no one can make a legitimate accusation in the midst of a wicked and perverse nation among whom you shine as lights in the world as you uphold the Message of Life. And if you do this, I shall rejoice in the Day of Christ that I have neither run nor labored pointlessly.
17 Yes, and even if my blood is poured out as a sacrificial offering for your faith, I rejoice both on my own and with you all.
18 And you should rejoice with me as well for the same reason!
19 But I trust in the Lord Jesus that I shall shortly send Timothy to you, that I may be comforted when he reports back about you.
20 I have no one else devoted to loving and caring about you the way *he* does.
21 For the others all worry about their own agendas, rather than the agenda of Jesus Christ.
22 But you know about Timothy--that he has proven himself by serving with me in the Gospel like a son serves his father.

23 So I hope to send him there as soon as I know what my fate here will be.
24 But I have confidence in the Lord that I will also come there soon.
25 Even so, I thought it necessary to send Epaphroditus--my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier--back to you, since he was the apostle you sent to minister to *my* needs.
26 For he missed you greatly, and was grieved because you had heard he was sick [and were worried about him].
27 And sick he was--even close to death. But God had mercy on both of us, lest he die and I have sorrow on top of sorrow.
28 Therefore, I am all the more anxiously sending him back so you can rejoice when you see him, and my own concerns can be assuaged.
29 So receive him joyfully in the Lord, and treat him--and people like him--with respect,
30 Because it was for the work of Christ that he nearly died, having no regard for his own life, to do for me in your name what you could not do from a distance.

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER 3

1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. I don't mind repeating this to you because it is an admonition for your own good.
2 Beware of [Cynic philosophers and their esoteric teachings]. Beware of those who do evil. Beware of those mutilators [who teach mandatory circumcision and Torah observance].
3-4 For we Christians are the *true* circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, rejoicing in Christ Jesus and placing no confidence in our own fleshly [Torah observance]--though if a man could have confidence in that, *I* certainly could! Indeed, if any man could feel secure through his own [Torah observance and background in Judaism,] I could feel even *more* secure!
5 I was circumcised on the eighth day of my birth, a member of the people of Israel from the tribe of Benjamin. I was, in fact, a Hebrew among Hebrews--being a Pharisee, in so far as Torah observance goes.
6 And with all zeal, I persecuted the church, while at the same time being blameless in so far as the righteousness that is in the Torah was concerned.
7 But things that were once gain to me, I now consider lost for Christ.
8-11 Yes, undoubtedly I count everything to be worth losing for the priceless knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all
things--considering them dung--that I may obtain Christ and be found in him, not having my own righteousness based on Torah observance, but the righteousness that comes from God through faith in Christ alone, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, conforming to the pattern of his death if by any means I can likewise attain the resurrection from the dead.
12 I am not saying that I have attained Christ's perfection, or that I am perfect. But I follow in his example so that I may become all that Christ Jesus wants me to be.
13 No, brethren, I do not consider myself to have become all I can be, but this thing I do: Forgetting the things of the past, and looking on to what lies ahead,
14 I press toward the finish line to win the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.
15 Let us, as many as are mature, have this attitude; and if there are also improper attitudes or beliefs still among you, God will reveal it [and correct you].
16 Nevertheless, let us be sure to walk in the same light and lifestyle we *have* been walking in.
17 Brethren, follow my example, and take note of those who have the same mindset as I do, using them as inspiration too.
18 For many walk, as I have often told you before and now tell you again with tears, as enemies of the cross of Christ.
19 Their end will be destruction, for their God is their own belly. They glory in shameful things, and they concern themselves with the things of this world.
20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from whence we also look for our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ--
21 Who will change our vile body, and fashion it like his own glorious body, according to his power to bring all things into subjection to him.

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER 4

1 Therefore, my dearly beloved brethren, whom I dearly love and long for, and consider to be my joy and my crown--stand fast in the Lord!
2 I beg Euodias, and beg Syntyche, that they be unified in the Lord.
3 And I ask you, my true Suzugos, to help the women who worked with me, Clement, and our other laborers in the Gospel, whose names are all written in the Scroll of Life.
4 [Remember--] rejoice in the Lord always. And again I say it: rejoice!
5 Let your easy-going nature be known to all men, for the Lord is very soon to return.
6 Don't be consumed with worry about anything, but in every need pray and make petition with thanksgiving, and in this way make your requests known to God.
7 And in return, the peace of God, which is based on knowledge and precepts far surpassing carnal human understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds secure through Christ Jesus.
8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are honest, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are worthy of love, whatever things are of good report; if there be any virtue or any praise in them, meditate on these things.
9 And the things you have either learned, been told by me, heard about, or seen me do--do them, and the God of peace shall be with you.
10 But I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that your concern for me has been sparked anew, even though it was there before, but you had no way to do anything about it.
11 I don't say that because I need you to donate funds to me, for I have learned to be content in whatever state I am in.
12 I know how to live in poverty and prosperity. Everywhere, and in all situations, I follow the principle of contentment, whether full or hungry, whether in abundance or need.
13 Yes, I can do anything I need to do, and endure anything I have to endure, through Christ who empowers me.
14 Even so, you have done well to come to my aid in my present afflictions.
15 You Philippians already know that in the beginning of my ministry of the Gospel, when I left Macedonia, no other church but you understood the principle of giving and receiving, and shared their resources with me.
16 Even when I was in Thessalonica, you twice sent donations to me.
17 [I remind you of this] not because I want another gift from you, but I desire that you bank blessings in heaven for *yourselves*.
18 But I have all I need, and am abounding in what counts. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things that were sent from

you--which are a delightful aroma, and a sacrifice acceptable and greatly pleasing to God.
19 And my God shall supply all *your* needs from *His* riches, in glory, through Christ Jesus!
20 Now to God our Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.
21 Greet all the righteous in Christ Jesus there. The brethren with me here greet you too.
22 All the righteous here salute you, especially those of Caesar's household.
23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

1st Timothy

1st TIMOTHY CHAPTER 1

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the order of God our Savior, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our hope;
2 To Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.
3 You recall that I urged you to remain in Ephesus, while I went on to Macedonia so that you could order some to teach no other doctrines [but the true ones];
4 And not to become embroiled in [Jewish myths], and endless genealogies, which only raise pointless questions instead of focusing on the godly edification that comes through faith. So keep on doing this.
5-7 Now the whole point I was aiming for was to foster love with a pure heart, clear conscience, and sincere faith--which some, unfortunately, have lost sight of by turning back into pointless debate and argument, desiring to be Torah teachers when they don't understand what they are saying, nor the repercussions of what they are so confidently espousing.
8 Now we know that the Torah is good if a man uses it in the way it was meant to be used.
9-11 For we know that the Torah was not made for a righteous man, but for the libertine and the disobedient, the ungodly and the sinner, the unholy and profane, murderers of parents, murderers of men, whoremongers, homosexuals, slave-traders, liars, perjurers--and anything else contrary to the sound doctrine that is in the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, which was placed in my trust.
12-13 And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who empowered me--for he considered me to be faithful, and put me into the ministry even though I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a man who did violence to the church. But I obtained mercy because I did it in ignorance, being unable to believe [in the concept of a crucified Messiah].
14 But the grace of our Lord [changed me, and abundantly filled me with the faith and love that is in Christ Jesus].
15 This is a comment you can absolutely believe: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I was, and am, the worst.
16 But this is exactly *why* I obtained mercy: That through my experience [--of Christ first saving the absolutely most hopeless and most undeserving case--] I could be an example of the patience of Jesus Christ toward those who would eventually believe in him and receive everlasting life [*through* my testimony]!
17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.
18-19 This is the commission I give to you, son Timothy, which is in accord with the prophetic utterances that were spoken over you as the sword by which you could wage a good fight and hold onto your faith with a clear conscience--unlike some, unfortunately, who have abandoned the faith, and shipwrecked themselves.
20 Hymenaeus and Alexander are two good examples, and I have given them over to Satan so they can learn not to blaspheme.

1st TIMOTHY CHAPTER 2

1 I therefore encourage you, first of all, to see to it that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all men:
2 For kings and anyone else in authority, that we Christians can lead a quiet, peaceful life in all godliness and honesty.
3 This is good and acceptable in the eyes of God our Savior,
4 Who desires all men to be saved, and to come to knowledge of the truth.
5 For there is one God and one mediator [who makes peace] between God and humanity: the man Christ Jesus,
6 Who gave himself as a ransom on behalf of all men, and who, at the right time, was testified about [to all men, including the Gentiles].
7 This is why I am ordained to be a preacher and apostle of his to teach the Gentiles faith and truth. When I say that, I am speaking the truth in Christ, and am not lying.
7 [*Alternate reading*]: This is why I am ordained to be a faithful and true preacher and apostle of his to teach the Gentiles. When I say that, I am speaking the truth in Christ, and am not lying.
8 I thus wish that men everywhere would pray [with a clear conscience and pure motives], without wrath and arguing.
9-10 In like manner, I would wish that women would [reflect Christian attributes, and] adorn themselves in modest clothing chosen out of a sound mind, rather than [taking their identity from] elaborate coiffures, flashy jewelry, or designer clothes. It's far better that women professing godliness should stand out for *good deeds*.
11 And let a wife learn placidly, in subjection to her husband.
12 But I do not allow a wife to teach, nor to usurp authority from her husband; she should keep her opinions to herself.
13 For Adam was formed first, and Eve came out of him later.
14 And Adam wasn't the one who was deceived; it was the *woman* who was tricked into transgression.
15 Even so, wives [will have a secure place in the marriage] if they have children, provided they also continue in faith, love, and holiness with a sober attitude.
15 [*Alternate reading*]: Even so, women will be saved because of the childbearing [of the Messiah], provided they also continue in faith, love, and holiness with a sober attitude.

1st TIMOTHY CHAPTER 3

1 You can certainly rely on the truth of this statement: If a man desires to hold the office of a church overseer, he desires a noble thing.
2 An overseer must be of sterling reputation, a [non-polygamist[, sober-minded, who behaves himself well and is quick to show hospitality. He should also be a good teacher.
3 He should not make drinking alcohol a common practice, nor can he be hot-tempered, nor greedy for ill-gotten gain. He should be patient, and not one given to fighting, nor the sort who is covetous.
4 He should show his success in soberly running his own household effectively, with well-behaved children--
5 For if a man doesn't know how to oversee his own house, how can he hope to oversee the church of God?
6 Not someone immature in the faith, lest he become puffed up with his own importance as happened with Satan, and likewise undergo condemnation.
7 Moreover, he should have a good reputation even in the secular community, lest he fall into disrepute and be ensnared by the devil.
8 Likewise, church elders must be dignified, not hypocrites, nor given to drinking too much wine or liquor, nor greedy for ill-gotten gain.
9 They should hold the things once hidden about the faith, that are now revealed, with a clear conscience.
10 Let them first be proved [in their solid grounding in the faith, and their effectiveness in working their way up to greater responsibilities]. After that, let them take on the position of elder, having been found to be blameless.
11 Also, their wives must be dignified, rather than the sorts who yield their gossiping tongues to Satan's use. They must be sober-minded and faithful in all they do.

12 Let the elders also be [non-polygamists] who rule their children and households well.
13 Those who effectively carry out the office of an elder deservedly earn themselves a good reputation for more important duties, and will be used more boldly in the faith of Christ Jesus.
14-15 I write these things to you in hope I can come to you shortly, though in the event it takes me a while, I want you to know how you should behave yourself in the House of God, which is the church of the Living God, and the pillar and ground of the truth.
16 Unquestionably, great is the mystery [of our religion]: [*God*] *was manifested in human form, justified through the Spirit, seen by angels, preached about to the Gentiles, believed on by the world, and was received up into glory.*

1st TIMOTHY CHAPTER 4

1 Now the Holy Spirit expressly says that as we near the end of the Age, some shall depart from the true faith, listening to seducing spirits and the demonic doctrines they teach.
2 These hypocrites will speak lies because their consciences will be scarred over with a red-hot iron.
3 They will insist people practice celibacy to be in the church, and command them to abstain from [certain meats], which God created to be eaten with thanksgiving by those who know and believe the truth.
4-5 For every creature of God is good, and there is no basis for refusing to eat it, so long as one eats with thanksgiving, for what is eaten is sanctified by God's decree, and prayer.
6 If you remind the brethren of these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished by the teachings and good doctrine of the faith that you have attained.
7 But turn away from godless debates and old wives' tales. Instead, exercise to build up godliness.
8 For all physical exercise can do is build up one's muscles--but godliness produces good in every area of life, producing God's sort of life both in this world and the next.
9 Trust what I say about this, and accept it.
10 For this is why we toil and endure reproach: Because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men [--be they Jew or Gentile--] and specifically for those who recognize that and come to faith in Christ.
11 Therefore, command and teach these points.
12 No one should disrespect you because of your young age, but counter that, if it arises, by being an example to the believers in teaching, lifestyle, attitude, faith, and purity.
13 Until I can come, focus on articulating [the Scriptures], exhortation, and doctrine.
14 Don't neglect the gift that was put in you through the prophecy that was given, and the ordination through laying on of hands by the elders.
15 Meditate on all I've told you, and give yourself wholly to these teachings, that all may see your edification through them.
16 Be diligent and conscientious in what you do with the doctrine, for in doing so and continuing in it, you will save both you and those who hear you [from the judgment to come upon the earth].

1st TIMOTHY CHAPTER 5

1 Do not sharply rebuke an older person, but treat him with the respect of a father; and treat the younger men as brothers.
2 Treat older women as mothers, and treat the younger women with purity, as you would your own sisters.
3 See to the needs of widows who are truly widows.
4 But if any widows have children or grandchildren, they should learn how to show reverence and support for their elders at home, something good and acceptable before God.
5 Now she who is really a widow, without family or resources to see to her own needs [--and thus is worthy of the church's provision--] trusts in God and should continually make prayers and supplications to Him day and night.
6 But a widow who "does her own thing" is a walking dead person.
7 Teach and proclaim all these things, that they may be blameless.
8 But if anyone does not provide for his own relations, and especially for his own direct family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an infidel.
9 Don't consider a widow to be qualified for support unless she is at least sixty years old, and has not been married to more than one man.
10 She should be known for having done good works, and if she has raised [godly] children, lodged strangers, [served the church], aided the less fortunate, and if she has been diligent in good deeds.
11 But the younger widows should not be put on the church welfare roles since they may still have to deal with some natural desires distracting them from Christ, and thus they may want to remarry.
12 This will bring condemnation on them since they will be [abandoning their vow to be consecrated to the work of the church].
13 At the same time, younger widows tend to have too much time on their hands and learn to be idle, wandering from house to house, gossiping and being busybodies, and speaking things they should not.
14 So I prefer that the younger women marry, have children, and run a good household so they don't give the devil occasion to slander Christianity [through others' tongues].
15 For some of these younger women have already turned aside to follow Satan [and his ways].
16 If any man or woman that is a believer in the church has a family member who is a widow, *they* should care for them, that the church is not burdened down with their upkeep, and so see to the needs of true widows.
17 Let the elders who do their jobs well be counted worthy of twice the [financial support] of other people, especially if they focus on [preaching and teaching].
18 Remember what the Scripture says: **Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn**. And: **The labourer is worthy of his reward.**
19 Don't listen to an accusation against a church elder unless there are at least two or three witnesses to it. [Which obviously means that their ministry is never to be done in private, but publicly, in view of all.]
20 As for those who are in continuous, unrepentant sin--rebuke them publicly so the congregation will learn the fear of God.
21 I charge you by God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that you do these things without showing partiality to anyone.
22 Don't ordain people into leadership who haven't first been tried and tested. Don't partake in other men's sins, but keep yourself pure.
23 [And before I forget--] Don't only drink water any more, but take a little alcoholic wine for your stomach and other problems.
24 [Despite your best efforts, there will always be wolves hiding in the flock, so remember that] some men's sins are clear for all to see [before the Last Judgment]; but some men's sins will never be known in this life, but will follow after them.
25 In the same way, the good deeds of some are known in this life, but even those that are not will be known in the next.

1st TIMOTHY CHAPTER 6

1 Let as many slaves who are in that state count their earthly masters worthy of all honor so that the name of God, and His doctrines, are not slandered.
2 And if a slave happens to have a master who is a believer, let him not resent him [for not automatically freeing him, despite being a brother Christian]. Instead, the slave should serve his master well, because [both] are faithful and beloved of God, and the master is blessed by the slave's faithful service. Teach and exhort these things.
3 If any man teaches otherwise [to what I have been saying in this epistle], and does not consent to wholesome teachings, even those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine that develops godliness--
4 He is arrogant, knowing nothing, but instead questioning God's ways in a contentious manner. Out of such attitudes come envy, strife, abuse, evil suspicions,
5 And twisted disputes among men of corrupted minds devoid of truth, who see our faith as a means for material gain. Turn your back on such people.
6 But godliness with contentment is great gain.
7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that we can take nothing with us when we leave it.
8 In having food and clothing, let us be content.
9 But those who yearn to be rich fall into temptation, and are ensnared by many foolish and harmful ambitions that drown men in destruction and devastation.
10 For the love of money is the cause of all sorts of injurious things that have caused some who've been caught up in it to stray from the faith and pierce themselves through with many sorrows.
11 But you, O man of God, flee from these things and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience and meekness.
12 Fight the good fight of faith and take hold of eternal life to which you have been called and displayed a good testimony of before many witnesses.
13 I commission you in the sight of God, who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus, who gave a good testimony before Pontius Pilate,
14 That you keep this command without varying from it, and without reproach, until the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,
15 Whom God, in His own good time, will reveal is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords,
16 Who alone is immortal, dwelling in the light [of God Himself] that no man can approach, Whom no man has ever seen nor can see. To him be honor and might everlasting. Amen.
17-19 Instruct those who are rich not to become arrogant, nor to place their trust in their transitory riches, but instead in the living God who richly gives us everything to enjoy. They should be rich in *good deeds*, and ready to share their resources [with the less fortunate], thus storing up a good account for the Age to come, that they may lay hold of true life.
20 O Timothy, keep that which has been placed in your care, avoiding pointless and vain disputes and arguments against the faith based on "science," falsely so called.
21 Some, you see, professing to be intellectuals, have erred from the faith. Grace be with you. Amen.

1st Peter

1st PETER CHAPTER 1

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the Gentile "Strangers among us," scattered throughout Pontus [northeast Turkey], Galatia [north central Turkey], Cappadocia [central Turkey], Asia [western Turkey], and Bithynia [northwest Turkey],
2 Who were chosen through the foreknowledge of God the Father to be sanctified by the Holy Spirit, that they may be obedient and sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ. May ever-increasing grace and peace be with you.
3-5 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who, in his abundant mercy, has given a second birth to us, that we may have a living hope--because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead--of receiving an incorruptible and undefiled inheritance that will never fade away. This inheritance is reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through your faith until the salvation that will be revealed at the end of time.
6 You greatly rejoice in this knowledge even though, if it's necessary, for a time you are downtrodden because of many persecutions.
7 Know that the testing of your faith--something more precious than gold which perishes--even though it is tested in the fire [of affliction], will ultimately be to your praise, honor, and glory when the earth sees the return of Jesus Christ,
8 Who, though never having seen, you love--and in whom you believe, though you don't see him yet--and in whom you rejoice with unspeakable joy that is full of glory,
9 Until you obtain the final goal of your faith: the salvation of your souls.
10-11 This salvation the prophets, who diligently searched out and foretold the grace that would be manifested and come to you, greatly desired to know more of. For they sought to learn both what their prophecies meant, and when they would come to pass, when the Spirit of Christ within them testified beforehand about the sufferings of the Messiah and the glory that would follow those sufferings.
12 They understood that these prophecies they were giving were not for them, in their time--but for us, in our time. And these things, which even the angels desire to know more about, have been passed on to you by those who have preached the Gospel in the Holy Spirit, who was sent down from heaven.
13 Therefore, discipline your thought life and be sober-minded, remaining confident to the end because of the grace that will be extended to you at the revealing of Jesus Christ [to the world at his return].
14 Be like obedient children, not letting your character and actions be molded by the former lifestyle and urges you knew when you were ignorant of God.
15 Instead, conform your lifestyles into an image of holiness, for He who called you is holy.
16 As it is written: **Be ye holy; for I am holy**.
17 And if you are among those who call upon the Father, who--without respect of persons--impartially judges every person's deeds, live out your life here on earth with sober fear.
18 For keep in mind that you were not ransomed out of the futility of the godless lifestyles you inherited from your ancestors with corruptible things like silver and gold.
19 You were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, who was like a [sacrificial] lamb without blemish or spot.
20-21 He truly was appointed to this task from before the world came into being, but only in these last days was made manifest for you who through him believe in God, who raised him up from the dead and gave him glory, so that you might have the same faith and hope in God as well.
22 Since you have purified your inner man, obeying the truth through the Spirit and sincerely loving your brethren, see to it that you perfect that love by fervently loving each other with a pure heart,
23 Being born again, not through corruptible *human* sperm, but through incorruptible, that being the decree of God, which lives and abides forever.
24 **For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away:**
25 **But the word of the Lord endureth for ever.** And this decree is the Message that has been preached to you in the Gospel.

1st PETER CHAPTER 2

1 And so, laying aside all malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and backbiting,
2-4 Desire the sincere milk of the Gospel message as [innocent] newborn babes, that you may be nourished by it and grow up to maturity--if you have indeed *tasted and found that the Lord is gracious*, to whom you come, as if to a living foundation stone rejected by men but chosen by God, and considered precious to Him.
5 You also, as living building bricks, are being built up into a spiritual temple and holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.
6 For the Scripture also says: **Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.**
7 To *you* who believe, he is indeed precious. But to those who refuse to believe, **the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,**
8 **And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence**. Yes, this is the fate of those who stumble at the Message, refusing to believe, which was a fate appointed them.
9 But you are *a chosen race, a confraternity of priest-kings, a holy nation, and a precious people*--so that you may declare praise to Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.
10 In time past, you were not His people and had not obtained mercy, but now you *are* His people and *have* obtained mercy!
11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as **strangers and pilgrims**, to abstain from fleshly desires that war against your soul.
12 Have an upright lifestyle among the pagans, so that--even though they may talk about you as evildoers--they may, by seeing your good deeds, [come to the faith and] glorify God on the day of visitation.
13 Obey every governmental institution for the sake of the Lord, whether it is to the Emperor as supreme,
14 Or various lesser governors that are sent out by him to punish evildoers, and to praise those who do well.
15 For this is the will of God, that by your doing good, you may silence the tongues of ignorant, foolish men.
16 Do this as men who, though they are free, do not use their freedom as a justification for wrongdoing, but instead use their freedom to serve God.
17 Respect all men. Love the brothers in the Messianic community. Fear God. Honor the Emperor.
18 Slaves, be obedient to your masters with all fear--not only if your master is good and gentle, but even if he is a hard taskmaster.
19 For it is praiseworthy if a man, for the sake of his conscience toward God, endures hardship, suffering undeservedly.

20 For what credit is there if someone strikes you for something wrong that you do, and you take it patiently? But if you suffer for doing what is right, and endure *that* with patience--well, this is pleasing to God.
21 For you have been called to act in such a manner because Christ also suffered patiently for us, leaving for us an example that we should follow in his footsteps.
22 **Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.**
23 And when he was reviled, he did not speak back in return; and when he suffered, he did not make threats to his abusers--but instead, he committed himself to God who judges righteously.
24 It was he who, in his own body, bore our sins on the "tree," so we, being dead to sin, should be made alive to righteousness; and it was *by his stripes that you all were healed*.
25 For you were *like sheep going astray*, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

1st PETER CHAPTER 3

1-4 Likewise, wives, be in subjection to your husbands, so that if any [husbands] do not obey the Gospel, they may--independent of the Gospel--be won over by their wives as they behold their pure and reverential lifestyle reflecting the fact that their adornment and identity come not by outward things like hair styles, expensive jewelry, and designer clothes, but in the hidden treasure of the heart, which is an adornment that is incorruptible: A meek and quiet spirit, something that in God's eyes is of great value.
5 For this is how the holy women of olden times who trusted in God adorned themselves, treating their own husbands with absolute respect and honor--
6 Just as Sarah, for instance, obeyed Abraham, calling him "Lord." You are daughters of hers so long as you do well, and do not let fear overcome you.
7 In the same way, husbands, take care of your wives in an understanding manner, honoring her as a weaker vessel but still an equal heir of the grace of [eternal] life [in Christ], so that God can respect and answer your prayers.
8 Finally, you all should have the same mindset of compassion for one another. Love each other as brothers, and be quick to show compassion and courtesy,
9 Not returning evil for evil, or insult for insult--but instead blessing, knowing this is what you have been called to do so that you, yourself, can inherit a blessing.
10 For: **He that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:**
11 **Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.**
12 **For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.**
13 And who would harm you if you pursue doing good things?
14 But if it so be that you suffer for doing the right thing--be happy! **Be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled**.
15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready, in meekness and respect, to give a good answer to every man who asks you why you have such confidence,
16 Having a clear conscience [when you reply], so that, whereas they may speak of you as if you are an evildoer, these same people who falsely accuse you may be ashamed by your Christlike lifestyle.
17 For it is better to suffer for doing good than it is to suffer for doing evil, if indeed God wills for you to suffer.
18-20 For Christ also suffered one time for man's sins--the just, suffering for the unjust--that he might bring us to God by dying in the flesh but arising to life in his spirit, through which he went and proclaimed things to those spirits in Hades who, in time past, refused to believe when long ago the patience of God was being extended to *them* in the days Noah was building the ark, in which only a few, eight souls, to be exact [who *did* have faith], were saved through the water.
21 This symbolizes the sort of baptism that now saves us--not simply putting away the dirt of the flesh, but instead asking God for a good [and clear] conscience by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,
22 Who has gone into heaven, and is now on the right hand of God, with angels, various [earthly and spiritual] authorities and powers being made subject to him.

1st PETER CHAPTER 4

1 So as Christ has suffered for us [and our sins] in his body, arm yourselves with the same willing attitude--for a person who has suffered in his body has broken with sin,
2 So that he should no longer live out his earthly days following the ungodly urges of humanity, but instead following the will of God.
3 For [you] spent enough time in your past, acting like pagans when you participated in lasciviousness, lusts, drunkenness, partying, carousing, and unrestrained idolatry.
4 Your old friends think it strange that you no longer run to fellowship with them in these outrageous things, and thus they speak badly about you.
5 But these shall one day give an account to [Christ], who is ready to judge the living and the dead.
6 This is why the Gospel was preached to some who have passed on, that they [through their testimony] might be judged by earthly rulers [and be slain in the flesh] only to live through God in the spirit.
7 But the end of all things is at hand. So be sober-minded and vigilant in your prayers.
8 And above all things, have a fervent love amongst you, for love covers a multitude of sins.
9 Show hospitality to the homeless in the Messianic community without being resentful for the intrusion.
10 And in proportion as anyone has received a gift from the Spirit, so you should minister your gifts between each other as good stewards of the manifold grace God has given you.
11 If any man has a message to proclaim, let it reflect the words and wisdom of God. If any man serves, let him do it as God has given him the ability to, that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever. Amen.
12 Beloved, don't think it strange--as if something unnatural has come upon you--regarding the fiery trial that you may be undergoing.
13 But rejoice [in such trials], for you are sharers of the sufferings of Christ in order that, when his glory is revealed [at the Second Coming], you may also be glad with exceeding joy.
14 If you are mocked and persecuted for being a Christian, happy are you--for *the Spirit of glory and* [*power*] *rests upon you*. On the part of those condemning you, he is spoken evil of, but on your part he is glorified.
15 But let none of you suffer for being a murderer, thief, evildoer, or for being a busybody in other people's business.
16 But if any man suffers for being a Christian, let him not be ashamed. Instead, let him glorify God for being associated with Christ and his name.
17 For the time has come that judgment must begin at the house of God--and if it begins first with us, what will the fate be of those who refuse to [believe and] obey the Gospel of God?!
18 **And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?**

19 Therefore, let those who suffer because God wills for it to happen, commit their souls into His keeping by continuing to do well, for He is a faithful Creator.

1st PETER CHAPTER 5

1-2 I, who am an elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, along with being one who will share the glory that will be revealed, exhort my fellow elders among you to feed the flock of God, overseeing that flock not out of obligation, but willingly; and not for ill-gotten gain, but instead because they *want* to do it!
3 Also, do not lord it over God's heritage, but be good examples to the flock.
4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive a glorious crown that will not fade away.
5 Likewise, you young people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you should learn how to serve one another and be clothed in humility, for: **God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble**.
6-7 So humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, casting all your cares upon Him--because He cares about you--so that He may exalt you in due time.
8 Be sober-minded, and vigilant, for your adversary, the devil, walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whomever he can gulp down.
9 Resist him steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same trials are also happening to your brethren elsewhere in the world.
10 But may the God of all grace, who has called us to his eternal glory by Christ Jesus--after you have suffered for a while--perfect, ground, strengthen, and settle you.
11 To Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.
12 Through Silas, whom I know to be a faithful brother to you, I have written this short letter, encouraging, proclaiming, and testifying that this is the true grace of God in which you should stand.
13 The church at "Babylon," elect with yourselves, sends greetings, as does Mark, my son.
14 Greet each other with a kiss of love. Peace be with you all who are in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Titus

TITUS CHAPTER 1

1 Paul, a slave of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ to bring God's elect to faith and acknowledgment of the truth that leads to, and illustrates, godliness,
2 In confidence of eternal life that God, the unlying, promised before the world began,
3 But has, in due time, manifested His declaration through preaching, a task I am appointed to through the command of God our Savior.
4 To Titus, my own son in our common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior.
5 I left you in Crete so you could finish what we had started, and ordain elders in every city as I had appointed you to do. [To aid you in fulfilling this commission, I advise you as follows:]
6 A qualified candidate should be of sterling reputation, a [non-polygamist], with faithful children who behave well, rather than being accused of riotous or rebellious living.
7 For a bishop must be upright, as the steward of God, and not self-centered, nor hot-tempered, nor given to drinking, nor a hothead always ready to fight, nor the sort who makes money unjustly.
8 He must love to show hospitality. He must love goodness. He must be sober-minded, fair, holy, and even-tempered,
9 Holding fast the faithful Message as he has been taught, so that he, through sound doctrine, can exhort and convince criticizing unbelievers to accept the Gospel.
10 [Seek for men like this,] for there are many insubordinate, vain-talking deceivers, especially among those from a background mandating circumcision and Torah observance.
11 The mouths of these people must be silenced, for they subvert whole [groups of believers], teaching things they should not--and all for the sake of ill-gotten gain.
12 In fact, Epimenides--himself, a Cretan orator--once made the point: "The Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons."
13 I couldn't have said it better myself! So rebuke those [preaching circumcision and Torah observance] sharply, that they may be sound in the faith,
14 Instead of giving in to Jewish fables and extra-biblical commandments of men who turn away from the truth [of salvation by grace, through faith in Christ].
15 "To those who are pure, all things are pure," but those who are [spiritually] defiled in their unbelief can be pure in nothing, for their mind and conscience is defiled.
16 They claim to know God, but prove they don't by their deeds, being abominable, disobedient, and useless in so far as doing anything good goes.

TITUS CHAPTER 2

1 But you--speak things which promote sound doctrine:
2 That the aged men be sober-minded, dignified, even-tempered, sound in faith, love, and patience.
3-5 That the older women should likewise display behavior consistent with holiness: Not false accusers, not given to too much wine; and teachers of good things--so they can teach the young women to be sober-minded, to love their husbands and children, and to be discreet, chaste, good housekeepers, and good and obedient to their husbands so that the Message of God is not spoken of in a blasphemous manner [by outsiders].
6 Young men should likewise be exhorted to be sober-minded.
7-8 You, yourself, need to show a pattern of good works by showing incorruptibility in your teaching; and serious, sincere, sound speech that no one can find fault with. Do this so that he who is against the Gospel will be put to shame for having nothing bad to say about you.
9 Exhort slaves to be obedient to their masters, and to perform all their tasks in a way that will please them, instead of back-talking.
10 They should not steal, but should show themselves good and faithful, so that in all things they can be a shining example of the doctrine of God our Savior.
11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men,
12 Teaching us that we should deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world,
13 As we fervently await the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,
14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify for himself a particularly prized people who are zealous to do good works.
15 Speak words like this, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Tolerate no disrespect from any man [in the church there].

TITUS CHAPTER 3

1 Instruct the believers to be in subjection to the governmental princes and authorities, to obey local magistrates, and be ready to perform every good work.
2 Tell them not to speak evil of any man, and instruct them not to be brawlers, but instead to be gentle, showing meekness to all men.
3 For we, ourselves, also were once foolish, disobedient, and deceived, giving in to different ungodly lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, being hateful, and hating one another.
4-7 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared [in the person of Jesus], He saved us not because of our righteous deeds, but because of His mercy, through the washing of regeneration and renewal through the Holy Spirit, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, being justified by His grace, we should all be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.
8 What I have just said is something you can place your faith in. And I wish you to affirm these teachings constantly, that those who have believed in God might be careful to pursue doing good deeds, for such deeds are good and profitable to men.
9 But avoid foolish questions, [Jewish] genealogies, and arguments and disputes about the Torah, for they are unprofitable and vain.
10. A man trying to bring sectarian division between Gentiles and Jews in the church should be warned once or twice. After that, have nothing more to do with him [and expel him from fellowship].
11 You can know that such a man is perverted and sinning, and is self-condemned for that.
12 When Artemas or Tychicus arrives there, make haste to come unto me at Nicopolis, for I have determined to winter there.
13 Speed Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way, and make sure they have all they need.
14 And let our people also learn to maintain good works for those in dire need, so their lives show good fruit.
15 All that are with me send greetings. Greet those in the faith who love us. Grace be with you all. Amen.

JUDE

JUDE CHAPTER 1

1 ude, the slave of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are [beloved] by God the Father, and called and preserved for Jesus Christ.
2 Mercy, peace and love be multiplied to you all.
3 Beloved: Though I had planned on writing [a positive letter] about the salvation we all share, it has instead become necessary for me to write and exhort you to earnestly hold to, and fight for, the Christian faith that was originally delivered to the righteous.
4 For there are certain ungodly men that have slithered their way into your fold who, from olden times, have been written about, foretelling their condemnation for denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ by perverting and substituting the truth of God's Gospel of grace into a lie giving license to commit sexual sin and debauchery.
5 I thus want to bring to your remembrance--even though you have heard this before--how the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed the ones who refused to believe [what He had said].
6 And the angels, who went beyond their
permitted authority, and left their original sphere of habitation [to breed with humans], God has also reserved in everlasting chains in the darkness of Tartarus until the [Last Judgment],
7 Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them that in like manner gave themselves over to sexual licentiousness, and engaged in forbidden sexual practices, are presented as an example to us--for *they* suffer the vengeance of everlasting fire.
8 In the same way, these filthy dreamers defile their bodies, reject correction, and speak evil of [heavenly] authorities.
9 Yet even Michael the archangel, when disputing over the body of Moses with the devil, didn't presume to denounce him, but simply said: "The Lord rebuke you!"
10 But these people speak evil about things they don't understand, and what they do understand comes from mere instinct, like brute beasts; and in those things [they believe], they corrupt themselves.
11 Woe to them, for they have gone the same bad way as Cain did [being faithless murderers whom God has rejected]; and they greedily ran down the same road as Balaam [selling out for money]; and, like Korah, they will be swallowed up for rebelling against authority.
12 These people are like reefs in front of a ship when they come to eat without fear [of God] at your gatherings for worship and fellowship. They are waterless clouds, blown about by the wind...they are autumn trees with either withered fruit, or no fruit at all--utterly dead, and plucked up by the roots.
13 They are raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame. They are "wandering stars," banished to the blackest darkness forever.
14 Enoch, the seventh [generation] from Adam prophesied about them, saying: **Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints,**
15 **To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.**
16 These are grumbling complainers who walk after their own [perverted] lusts. Their mouths are always ready to flatter and boast in order to take advantage of people.
17 But, beloved, remember the words which the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ spoke before.
18 They told you there would be mockers in the last days who would walk after their own ungodly lusts.
19 These people are those who cause dissension. They are carnal, and devoid of the Holy Spirit.
20-21 But you, beloved, building yourselves up in the most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, and await the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will give you eternal life.
22-23 And have compassion on those whose faith is weak. Others save, pulling them out of the fire. Continue showing mercy [to those who have heard and rejected the Gospel, while hating and keeping yourself from their unrighteousness].
22-23 [*Alternate reading*]: Stand against those criticizing the faith. Others save, pulling them out of the fire. Show mercy [to those who have heard and rejected the Gospel, while hating and keeping yourself from their unrighteousness].
24 Now to Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you in perfection before the presence of His glory with tremendous joy,
25 To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.

2nd PETER

2nd PETER CHAPTER 1

1 Shimon Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ, to [the Gentiles] who have obtained the same precious faith as us through the righteousness of God, and our Savior Jesus Christ:
2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you through the knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord.
3 Through Christ's divine power he has given us all we need to walk in life and godliness through our ever-increasing knowledge of Him who called us to glory and goodness.
4 Through that power you also have been given very great and precious promises, so that through them you might be conformed to his divine nature, having escaped the [soul-polluting] corruption of the world and the deceitful desires those in it yearn for.
5 Besides this, be diligent to add a high moral standard to your faith along with [God's sort of] knowledge.
6 To [God's sort of] knowledge, add self-control. And to self-control, add patience. And to patience, add godliness.
7 To godliness, add compassion for your brethren. And to compassion for your brethren, add a self-sacrificing sort of love.
8 For if these traits abound in you, they will place you in position to never be barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.
9 But the person who lacks these qualities is [spiritually] blind, and cannot see past his own nose, for he has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.
10 So don't be like that, brethren. Instead, make every effort to secure your calling and election by pursuing these things, and you will never fall--
11 And a warm welcome will await you in the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
12 Thus, I will not neglect constantly reiterating these things to you, though you've heard them before and are standing in the truth even now.
13 Indeed, I think it good, so long as I am alive in the tent of this earthly body, to re-ignite the fire of zeal in you by reminding you of these things.
14 For I know that shortly I will leave this body behind, even as our Lord Jesus Christ has shown me.
15 I want to make sure that after my departure you will never forget these things.
16 For we were not following cunningly designed myths when we proclaimed the power and incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ--we were actually eyewitnesses of his majesty.
17 For he received honor and glory from God the Father when a voice issued forth from His incomprehensible radiance that said: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!"
18 And this *Bat Kol* [--heavenly voice--] we heard with our own ears when we were with him in the Holy Mount.
19 We thus have a more certain verification of the prophetic word found in the Scriptures, which you are doing well to heed as a light that shines in the darkness until the day dawns and the daystar arises in your hearts.
19 [*Alternate reading*]: But we have a more certain "word" than *that*, which you are doing well to heed as a light that shines in the darkness until the day dawns and the daystar arises in your hearts. [That "word" is the Scriptures.]
20 First, know this: No prophecy in the Scriptures ever unraveled through the prophet's own private [understanding, speculation, or intention].
21 For prophecy did not, in the olden days, come forth by *human* will. Instead, holy men of God spoke as the *Holy Spirit* moved them to speak.

2nd PETER CHAPTER 2

1 But there were false prophets in those days among the people, as there will be false teachers among you
today--who will slip in damnable heresies, including even a denial of the Lord who purchased them [with his blood], bringing upon themselves swift destruction!
2 Many will imitate their licentious behavior, and because of this, "The Way of Truth" will be blasphemed [by outsiders].
3 In their greed, they will speak with lying tongues of flattery, and strip you of all your goods. But their judgment and condemnation has been decreed from long ago, and will not be put off.
4 For if God did not spare the angels who sinned [by cohabiting with humans], but cast them down into Tartarus, where they are chained in utter darkness until their time of judgment...
5 And if God did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, the eighth person on the Ark--who was a preacher of righteousness--while sending the flood upon the world of the ungodly...
6 And if He turned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemning and overthrowing them, thus making them an example to those who afterward would live in an ungodly manner...
7-9 And if He delivered Lot, a just man who was grieved at the debauched lifestyle of the wicked there, for that righteous man who dwelt among them, seeing and hearing what was going on, was grieved in his righteous soul as he watched their evil deeds day after day...then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of trials, while appointing the unjust to receive punishment on the Day of Judgment!
10 And the ones who will be especially punished are those who walk after the flesh in unclean sexual lust, and despise any rule over them. They are arrogant, self-willed, and have no fear of mocking the angels [who oversee church propriety].
11 But even the angels, who are greater in power and might [than mere humans], don't make any railing accusations against these people before the Lord.
12 But these people, like dumb animals acting on instinct alone--fit only to be taken and destroyed--disrespect and criticize what they don't understand, and shall utterly perish in their own corruption.
13 They will reap the reward of unrighteousness [just as freely] as they think nothing of debauchery in broad daylight. They are spotted and wrinkled [like unclean sacrifices not fit for God], glorying in their deception while they feast alongside you.
14 Their eyes are ever open to sexual sin, and they cannot turn from unrighteousness. They deceive unstable people, and are cursed children with hearts of greed,
15 Who have forsaken the right way and gone off path, walking down the road of Balaam, son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness.
16 But he was rebuked for his iniquity when his mute donkey spoke with a man's voice to criticize this prophet's madness.
17 These people are empty wells. They are waterless clouds [--looking good but offering nothing--] blown about in a storm, to whom everlasting darkness awaits.
18 For when they speak their arrogant words of vanity, they entice back into sin those who have just escaped such error and become clean, by appealing to the wanton lust of their flesh.
19 While they promise them freedom, these men are nothing more than slaves of corruption, for a man is enslaved by what he lets overcome him.

20 For if, after someone has escaped the pollution of the [unsaved] world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, his ultimate end is far worse than he was when he started if he becomes entangled in unrighteousness again.
21 It is better for such people to have never known the path of righteousness, than, after knowing it, to turn from the holy commandment [--to repent, and be holy as He is holy--] that was delivered to them.
22 In their case, the proverbs are true that: *The dog is turned to his own vomit again.* And: *The sow that was washed,* [*returned*] *to her wallowing in the mire.*

2nd PETER CHAPTER 3

1-2 This second letter, beloved, I now write, hoping to again stir up your pure minds to remember the words spoken of in the past by the holy prophets; and to recall the commandment given by we apostles of the Lord and Savior:
3-4 First, be aware that in the last days scoffers, walking in their own lusts, will arise, saying: "Where is the promise of his second coming? Since our ancestors died, nothing has changed since the world began--it's always the same!"
5 But they choose to willingly be ignorant that by God's command, the universe was created in the olden times, and the earth itself was formed out of water and by water--
6 And through an inundation of water, the older world was destroyed [in Noah's time].
7 But the present heavens and the earth, by the same spoken command of God, are being reserved for the eventual fate of being consumed by fire in the Day of Judgment, when ungodly men will go down to perdition.
8 But, beloved, don't be ignorant of the fact that, from God's perspective, *One day to Him is as a thousand years to us*--and a thousand years to us is like one day to Him! [In other words, a thousand years of time is no more noticeable to *Him* than a day is to us; and He can accomplish in a day what would take a thousand years otherwise!]
9 See, the Lord is not slow regarding His promise as some men count slowness. But He is patient to humanity, not wanting any to be lost, but desiring that all men should repent.
10 But when the Lord *does* come, the Day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night! In that one day the cosmos will pass away with a great roar as the building blocks of the universe melt with tremendous heat. The earth also, and everything in it, will be consumed in that fire.
11-12 So, given the fact that all we see will dissolve in destruction, what sort of person should you be with respect to living a godly lifestyle as you look for and eagerly await the Day of God, when the skies of the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved in great heat along with building blocks of the universe?
11-12 [*Alternate reading*]: So, given the fact that all we see will dissolve in destruction, what sort of person should you be with respect to living a godly lifestyle as you look for and hasten the Day of God, when the skies of the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved in great heat along with building blocks of the universe?
13 Even so we, according to the promise Christ made, look forward to a new universe and a new earth, where righteousness will dwell.
14 Because of your looking forward to this, beloved, be diligent to maintain your lifestyle in such a way that he can find you in peace, being spotless and blameless.
15 And consider that the forbearance of the Lord in returning is for the purpose of saving people, even as our beloved brother Paul, using the wisdom given him, has written to you as well,
16 Speaking of things like this in all his epistles, though some things he says are hard to understand, and the unlearned and non-committed twist his words--as they do the other Scriptures--to their own destruction.
17 Beloved, since you have always known these things, beware, lest you also--being led away by the error of the wicked--abandon your own perseverance.
18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen.

HEBREWS

HEBREWS CHAPTER 1

1 God, who at different times and various ways, spoke in times past to our ancestors through the prophets,
2 Has, in these last days, spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed to inherit all things, and through whom He also created the cosmos.
3 He is the radiant glory of God [--the *Shekhina*--] and the perfect reflection of God, sustaining all things by the awesome power of his spoken word. When he,
single-handedly, purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of Majesty on High,
4 Being exalted so much more than any of the angels, because he inherited a more excellent position of authority than they.
5 For when did God ever say to a mere angel: **Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee**? And: **I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son**?
6 God also said, when He sent His firstborn into the world: **And let all the angels of God worship him**.
7 But regarding angels, God said: **...who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire**.
8 In comparison, He said about His Son: **Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.**
9 **Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows**.
10 And**: Thou, Lord: In the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands:**
11 **They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment;**
12 **And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.**
13 And when did God ever say to any mere angel: **Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool**?!
14 So then--aren't angels [simply] ministering spirits sent forth to aid those who will be the heirs of salvation?!

HEBREWS CHAPTER 2

1 Therefore, we should keep careful watch on remaining firmly anchored to the things we have heard, lest at any time we get apathetic or begin to forget, and one day find we have drifted onto the shoals of catastrophe!
2 For if the decree spoken by *angels* [at Sinai] held full authority, and every transgression and disobedience of it resulted in justifiable punishment,
3 How shall *we* escape [judgment] if we ignore such a great [means of] salvation that was proclaimed first by the Lord and then confirmed to us by those who heard him personally?
4 God also confirmed their testimony with signs, wonders, various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit as He willed to do.
5 Also, God has not planned for the *angels* to have charge over the [re-created earth and age to come], which we preach about.
6 For in the Scriptures, God said through David: **What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him**?
7 **Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands:**
8 **Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet.** Now in God's saying that He had put "***all* things**" under subjection to man, He obviously left nothing *out* of subjection to him [--including all angelic beings]. But at the present time, [while things are *positionally* under man through Christ,] we do not actually see them under his *practical* authority yet.
9 What we do see is Jesus, *who was made a little weaker than the angels* so that he could suffer physical death, now *crowned with glory and honor*, so that he--because of God's grace [toward us]--should taste death for every mortal man.
10 For it was appropriate to God, to whom all things belong, and by whom all things were commanded to come into being, to make the agent of mankind's salvation complete through suffering [in the body] so that he could bring many sons to glory.
11 For both Jesus, who did the sanctifying, and those whom he has sanctified, have the same Father, and form one family unit. This is why he is not ashamed to call them his brothers,
12 For he said: **I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.**
13 And also: **I will put my trust in him.** And: **Behold I, and the children which God hath given me.**
14 So, since the "**children**" are flesh and blood beings, Jesus likewise became flesh and blood, so that through enduring [--and conquering--] death, he might defeat [and strip of authority] the devil, who had the authority over death.
15 In doing this, Jesus would deliver those who, through the fear of death [and what comes afterward], were in bondage all of their lives.
16 And to do this, Jesus did not take on the nature of angels but instead took on the nature of humanity by coming through physical descent of Abraham.
17 This is why it was appropriate for Jesus, in all ways, to be made in the same image of us, his brothers, so that he could be a merciful and faithful High Priest in service to God, making reconciliation [and atonement] for the sins of the people.
18 For since he suffered and conquered all the sorts of temptations and trials *we* face, he is able to aid us in all of them.

HEBREWS CHAPTER 3

1 Because of this, holy brethren and partakers of the heavenly calling, keep in mind the Messenger and High Priest whom we profess, Christ Jesus,
2 Who was faithful to God who appointed him, in the same way Moses was *faithful regarding all the things in His "House"* [--the Tent Tabernacle in the wilderness].
3 For this man, Jesus, was counted more worthy of honor than even Moses, in the same way a man who builds a house is entitled to more honor than the structure he erects is.
4 For every house is built by some man, but God is the one who created all the things that house is made from [--including the man who builds it].
5 And Moses truly was *faithful regarding all the things in His "House"* as merely a slave when he ministered in God's Tent Tabernacle, being a precursor to greater things that were prophesied to come in later centuries.
6 But Christ was faithful as a *son* over His Temple--whose Temple *we* are, provided we cleave to the hope in which we glory and rejoice, and hold fast to the end!
7 Now listen--remember what the Holy Spirit said: **Today if ye will hear his voice**,
8 **Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:**
9 **When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.**

10 **Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways.**
11 **So I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.**
12 So beware, brethren, lest any of you depart from the Living God through an evil heart that is skeptical of what God says.
13 But encourage one another daily--because every day is "**Today**"--lest any of you harden your hearts through the deceitfulness of sin.
14 For we will share all Christ has if we hold our original confidence firm to the end.
15 And for us, this will always be an axiom to heed: **Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.**
16 For some who heard the message of their time did provoke God--though not all who came out of Egypt with Moses were guilty of this.
17 But with whom was God "**grieved**" during the forty years in the wilderness? Wasn't it with those who sinned [--despite being given the promise--] whose bodies fell in the wilderness?
18 And who was it, but these same people who would not believe, that God swore '*would not enter into His rest*'?
19 So we see that they could not enter [into the Promised Land of God's rest] because they could not believe [what they had been promised].

HEBREWS CHAPTER 4

1 Therefore, let us take nothing for granted, lest any seem to come short of the promise that *we* will enter God's rest.
2 For to us was the "Good news" preached, just as it was to the Israelites of Moses' time. But in their case it did not bear fruit because the people of that time [did not mix the promise of rest with conscious belief it would come to pass].
3 But those of us who *have* believed are the ones who enter into rest. Remember what God said: *As I have sworn in my wrath, they shall never enter into my rest.* God said this, even though His works [and the entire timeline of human history] had been pre-ordained and formed from the foundation of the world.
4 For in the Scriptures, God spoke about this thing that was represented by the Sabbath: **And God did *rest* the seventh day from *all* his works.**
5 And elsewhere: *They shall not enter into my rest.*
6-7 Since it is apparent, then, that at least *some* must enter into rest, and the first ones to whom the message came did not enter in because they refused to believe, God established "**Today**" [to fulfill His promise], saying much later, through David as we noted: **Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.**
8 For if *Joshua* had given Israel rest, God would not have later spoken through *David* of another day of rest still to come!
9 Thus, there is, and shall come, a Rest for the people of God.
10 For he that is entered into God's rest has also ceased from his own works, just as God did [--for the work is entirely complete at that point, needing nothing more added to it].
11 So let us endeavor to enter into that rest, lest any man be caught up in the same trap of refusing to believe what he has been told.
12 For the word of God is alive, powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and can even divide the soul from the body, the [physical from the metaphysical], and "tells it like it is" when it exposes the motivations of the thoughts and intents of our heart against what it teaches and proclaims.
13 Likewise, there is no man who can hide anything from God's sight--all our thoughts and motivations are an open book to Him to whom we shall stand before [and give account].
14 But since we have a great High Priest who has passed through [and ministers in] heaven itself--Jesus, the Son of God--let us hold fast to our faith and confidence.
15 For we do not have a High Priest who does not understand what we are going through. Our High Priest [--though perfect--] was, in fact, tempted in all the ways we face temptation, but he did not sin.
16 So let us fearlessly approach the throne from which all grace flows, and we will find mercy and grace to help us in our time of need.

HEBREWS CHAPTER 5

1 For every human High Priest is ordained to function before God on behalf of his fellow human men, so that he can offer both gifts and sacrifices for their sins.
2 He can [strike a balance between condemnation and mercy] toward those who do not have full knowledge of the things they should do, while understanding the failings of other men who do know the truth but stray from the path every so often, seeing as he is a fallible human being himself.
3 That is why he needs to make sacrifices for *his* sins, as well as those of the rest of the Jewish people.
4 And no man has the right to take this honor to himself--only someone God calls may do so, as was the case with the first High Priest, Aaron.
5 So also Christ did not exalt himself up to be mankind's High Priest--*God* gave him that position when He said: **Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.**
6 God reiterated this in another verse of Scripture: **Thou art a priest forever, after the order of Melchisedec.**
7 Now Jesus, when he walked on the earth as a human man, offered up prayers and desperate requests with weeping and tears to God, who was able to preserve him through the death process. And God heard him because of his reverential fear.
8 And even though he was a Son, he learned what it is to obey by the things he suffered.
9 And being made perfect [by obeying unto suffering], he became the agent of eternal salvation to all who likewise obey *him*.
10 Thus, he was called of God to the rank of High priest **"after the order of Melchizedek**."
11 Now we would love to go into deeper detail about all this and unravel some of the wonderful mysteries on the subject--but we can't because of your laziness in hearing.
12 For even though by now you should be teaching others the mysteries of the Gospel, you have need of someone again teaching *you* the foundations of God's revelations! The fact is, you need milk, and not solid food.
13 And everyone who still needs milk lacks any in-depth knowledge of the doctrine of righteousness, because he is merely a baby Christian.
14 Strong meat, meanwhile, goes to grown men--those who, by their maturity, have their senses attuned to discern good and evil [and truth and error].

HEBREWS CHAPTER 6

1 Therefore, leaving the elementary principles of the Christian faith, let us go on to maturity, not reiterating the fundamentals of: Repentance from the dead works [of sin and legalistic Torah observance]; and faith toward God.
2 Doctrines about immersions. Laying on of hands [for the baptism of the Spirit or ordination to ministry]. The resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.
3 And this we will do, if God permits.
4-6 For it is impossible to renew to repentance those others who once knew the truth about Christ, tasting the heavenly gift, and

partaking of the Holy Spirit, who have also sampled the good Message of God and the power of the Messianic Age to come, and who, despite this, have [renounced Christ in order to return to the Jewish community and its sacrificial system]. Those who have done this have crucified the Son of God again, and put him to a public shame [by their public repudiation of him].
7 For the ground that drinks in the rain as often as it falls upon it, and sprouts herbs that are useful for the planters, displays that it is a ground that has received blessing from God.
8 But ground that produces thorns and thistles might wind up as cursed ground, and be burned bare in the end.
9 But, beloved, we are certain we can expect better from you, including the fruits that accompany salvation, though we speak like this to you.
10 For God is not unrighteous, forgetting the work and labor of love you have displayed in His name by ministering, and continuing to minister, to the righteous.
11-12 Our hope is that all of you will continue to walk in the same diligence to the end, so your confidence will remain sure, and you do not fall into apathy, but instead imitate those who, by faith and patience, inherit the promises.
13 For when God made a promise to Abraham, swearing by Himself since there was no one greater that He could swear by,
14 He said: **Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.**
15 And so after *Abraham* had patiently endured, he laid hold of the promise.
16 For men making oaths swear by something or Someone greater than themselves to assure what they are going to do, and invoking such an oath settles the debate.
17-18 So then God, even more desirous of showing those in line to inherit His promise how unbreakable His decision was, confirmed it by an oath, so that by two unalterable factors from a God who cannot lie [--a promise and an oath--] we, who have *fled to Him for refuge*, might have absolute assurance of the hope set before us.
19-20 This hope--this absolute guarantee to our soul--is fixed like an anchor whose chain stretches beyond the veil into the very Holy of Holies, where it is secure in our forerunner who is already there: namely Jesus, who has been made *A High Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.*

HEBREWS CHAPTER 7

1 For this priest of God Most High--Melchizedek--was king of Salem [the early Jerusalem], and met Abraham when he was returning from the Slaughter of the Kings, and blessed him.
2 Abraham also gave a tithe of 10% of what he had taken to this man, whose name means *King of Righteousness*, and who also [had the title of] *King of Salem*, which means, *King of Peace*.
3 He had no recorded parents, nor descendants [to inherit his office], nor is there a record of when he began his ministry or when he ended it, so--prefiguring the Son of God--he is considered to be a priest that ministers perpetually [since no one can prove that he ever died].
4 Consider how important this man was that even the Patriarch Abraham tithed 10% of the captured valuables to him!
5 And truly, those descended from Levi, who hold the office of priests, are commanded to receive tithes from the people as the Torah says--even from their own brothers, despite their all equally being the descendants of Abraham.
6 But this Melchizedek, who had no descent through the Levitical line of priests, received tithes from Abraham, and pronounced a blessing *upon* Abraham, who had received God's promises before this event.
7 Now we absolutely know that only someone of superior rank can pronounce a blessing on someone else [who must be of lesser rank].
8 And here, in this life, men who will eventually die receive tithes. But it is attested to that back then, a man who *never* died--and still lives--received tithes!
9-10 And I might point out that [the tribe of] Levi which would, in due course, receive tithes [through the Levitical priesthood,] in a sense *rendered* tithes to Melchizedek through Abraham. [Thus, both the head of the tribe of Levi, and the priests that would descend from him, acknowledged that Melchizedek held a superior rank and priesthood.] For Levi [and the Levites] were still in the loins of their ancestor Abraham when Melchizedek met him [and Abraham delivered the tithe in both his and their name].
11 So then, if perfection came through the *Levitical* priesthood--for under that priesthood the people received the Torah--why was it necessary that a subsequent prophecy be made in the Psalms that another priest would arise who would be **after the order of *Melchizedek***, rather than Aaron?
12-14 Since the Aaronic priesthood would be abrogated through this prophecy, it only follows that the Torah itself [which cannot be altered in any way if it is in force] would likewise have to be abrogated. For the one prophesied to become this priest--Jesus--clearly "branched" from the tribe of Judah, a tribe that never produced any priest that ministered at the altar, and which Moses in the Torah said nothing about with regard to the priesthood.
15-16 This [prophetic abrogation of the Torah in favor of a New covenant] is far more evident given the fact that this Melchizedekal priest would arise and be appointed, not through Torah commands that mandate descent from Levi, a dead Patriarch--but outside that requirement because *he* would have the power of an *everlasting life*! [Thus, the whole Torah system could not do other than become moot and pass into history when he arrived with his superior everlasting priesthood!]
17 For remember God testified about *this* immortal priest: **Thou art a priest *forever* after the order of Melchisedec.**
18 And so the commandments of the Torah in force before this priest arrived were disannulled because they were imperfect and unprofitable [as the mortal priests they pertained to likewise were].
19 For the covenant of the Torah perfected no one, but the institution of something much better to place our confidence in [--Christ and *his* priesthood and covenant--] *did*, by whom we draw near to God!
20 And [unlike other priests], he became a priest through an oath!
21 For Levitical priests were made without an oath--but Christ was made a priest *through* an oath: **The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.**
22 The fact that Jesus was appointed by a [prophetic] oath makes him the guarantor of a better covenant [compared to that of the Torah and its Levitical priesthood].
23 And there were truly many High Priests over the centuries, because they had to pass their offices down to others because [as mortal men] they eventually died.
24 But this man, because he is alive forever, therefore has a priesthood that will *never* come to an end!
25 Therefore, he is able to absolutely save those who come to God *through* him since he is perpetually living to intercede *for* them.
26 And this is the perfect sort of High Priest for us: One who is holy, blameless, undefiled--distinct from sinners--and exalted higher than the highest heavens!
27 And he does not need [--like Levitical High Priests--] to offer a daily sacrifice for his own sins first, and then those of the people, for he did this one time when he offered up himself [as a sacrifice].

28 For the Torah outlines the way to make fallible human men High Priests--but the decree contained in the oath, which was enacted long after the Torah was given, superseded the Torah by consecrating the Son High Priest--a Son who is made perfect *forever*!

HEBREWS CHAPTER 8

1 All right--so this is the sum of what we have been saying: We have a High Priest like this who is set on the right hand of God's throne of Majesty in the heavens,
2 Who officiates in the true [heavenly] Holy Place and tabernacle that God--not man--erected.
3 For since every High Priest is ordained to continually offer gifts and sacrifices, it was necessary that *this* High Priest also provide something [but for a *one-time* offering].
4 For if he were on earth, he would not be a priest, seeing that there are currently priests here who offer up gifts as the Torah requires.
5 But these priests [and their sacrifices] are doing nothing more than showing an example of what goes on and exists in heaven, just as Moses--when he was about to build the first tabernacle--was admonished: "**See**," God said, "**that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.**"
6 But now Christ has been given a vastly superior ministry, by which he is the mediator of a [vastly] superior covenant, which was established on [vastly] better promises [than those of the Torah].
7 For if the first covenant [--the Torah--] had been perfect, there would be no need of instituting a second covenant [to supersede it].
8 But God--finding fault with the *people*--said: **Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a New covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:**
9 **Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.**
10 **For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:**
11 **And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.**
12 **For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.**
13 By virtue of the fact God used the words, "**A New covenant**," it is obvious that He made the *first* covenant old [and obsolete]. And that which decays and grows old is now ready to vanish away completely.

HEBREWS CHAPTER 9

1 Now the first covenant also had ordinances of divine service, along with an earthly sanctuary [in the wilderness].
2 For in that time they fashioned a Tent Tabernacle, which had within its first compartment the menorah, the table, and the *shewbread*. This was called the *Holy Place*.
3 Beyond that compartment, past the second curtain, was the part of the tent called the *Holy of Holies*.
4 In there was the golden altar of incense and the Ark of the Covenant, overlaid with gold, that contained the golden pot of manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant.
5 And atop the ark were the two cherubim of glory overshadowing the Mercy Seat, which we won't go into detail about at this time.
6 Now the system being structured in this manner requires the Levitical priests to always stay within the first part of the tent as they perform their ministerial duties to God.
7 But once a year, the High Priest goes alone into the second part of the tabernacle--and he enters with the blood from a sacrifice, which he then offers up for the *unintentional* sins of both himself and the Jewish people.
8 The Holy Spirit by this was illustrating that the way into the Holy of Holies was not yet open [to all men], and *would* not be while the first tabernacle [and its system] was still in place.
9-10 This whole system represents what has been in place down to our own time, in which the sacrificial gifts and offerings that are made can never make the High Priest offering them up truly perfect [and acceptable in God's eyes], for his [sinful nature] can never really be made pure under a system that deals only with ritual meats, drinks, immersions, and carnal commandments made for regulating life until the time of reformation arrives.
11 But then Christ came on the scene as a High Priest who was a fulfillment of the good things to come; and he entered a greater and more perfect Temple that was not built by human hands, and not an earthly tabernacle.
12 And he did not enter this [heavenly] Temple bearing the blood of bulls and calves, but he entered the Holy Place [in heaven] one time with *his own* blood, having obtained everlasting redemption for us [through it]!
13-14 For if the blood of earthly bulls, goats, and the ashes of a red heifer, sprinkling unclean men, made them sanctified and purified them outwardly in the *flesh* [to minister to God as priests in the earthly Temple], how much more shall the blood of Christ--who, through the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit, lived his life in a state of perfect sanctification to God before offering himself up as the ultimate sacrifice--purge your *inner* man from its propensity to sinful acts so that you can minister as priests to the living God [in a positional state of purity even *greater* than that of a Jewish High Priest]?!
15 And this is why Jesus is the mediator of this *New* covenant, that by means of dying for the redemption of [even *intentional*] transgressions under the first covenant, those who have been called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.
16 For where there is a will [listing an inheritance], obviously the person writing the will must die for the inheritance to be given.
17 For a will applies only after the writer is dead, and before that it has no force.
18 Thus, even the first covenant was inaugurated through shed blood.
19 For when Moses had spoken every precept in the Torah to all the people, he took the blood of calves [and goats], with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the scroll of the Torah and all the people,
20 Saying: **This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.**
21 Moreover, he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels within it that were used for purposes of ministry.
22 And almost all things, according to the Torah, are ritually cleansed with blood--and without the shedding of blood there is no remission [of sin and impurity].
23 And so it was therefore necessary that copies of the things in the heavens [--shown in pattern by the earthly tabernacle--] had to be purified by things such as these. However, the heavenly things themselves had to be purified with much better sacrifices than those of earthly animals.
24 Thus, Christ [--the blood-bearer--] did not enter into the Temple and its Holy Places that were made with human hands, which are

mere representations of the true things in heaven. Instead, he bypassed them and entered directly into the tabernacle in heaven itself so that he should always be in the direct presence of God [interceding] for us.
25-26 He also does not have to continually sacrifice himself in the way an earthly High Priest must make a yearly sacrifice during *Yom Kippur* with the blood of animals, for otherwise he would have had to suffer perpetually, throughout time. But now, at the end of the Age, he has come to take away sin by sacrificing himself.
27-28 And just as it is appointed to men to die once, and after that face judgment, so Christ was offered up one time to bear the sins of the many of us--and to those who wait expectantly for him shall he appear the second time, not to deal with sin, but to take away all repercussions of sin as the final fruit of salvation.

HEBREWS CHAPTER 10

1 For the Torah, being as it was only a foreshadowing of things to come, and not the full image of what *was* coming, could never--with the yearly sacrifices contained *within* it for those who come to God *through* it--make men into what God wants them to be, which is perfect.
2 Otherwise, why must the same sacrifices have to be made continually? The worshippers, once purged of sin, should logically have been made free from their [fallen natures], and sinned no more.
3 But those yearly sacrifices remind us that the people are obviously caught up in a cycle of continuous sin.
4 For it is not possible that the blood of *bulls and goats* could wipe the sin debt clean and perfect people as well!
5 That is why, when Jesus came into the world, he said: **Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a *body* hast thou prepared me:**
6 **In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure.**
7 **Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.**
8 Note that he first said, **Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein**--and this referred to the animals proscribed for offerings by the Torah!
9 Then he said, **Lo, I come to do thy will, O God**. So God took away the first system [of animal sacrifice] so that He could establish the second,
10 By which, in this '*will of God*,' we are sanctified perpetually through the sacrificial offering of the body of *Jesus Christ*!
11 Now every [Levitical] priest daily performs his ministerial duties, some of which include enacting the same animal sacrifices, which can never [perfect people and] remove sins [and sinning] from them.
12 But the man Jesus, after he had offered one sacrifice to deal with sin forever, [ended the work with that, and thus] sat down at the right hand of God,
13 Where he is waiting expectantly, **till his enemies be made his footstool**.
14 By one sacrificial offering, *he* has forever perfected [--and broken the power of sin--] in those who are being sanctified!
15 The Holy Spirit also witnesses to us about this, for He said in the Scriptures:
16 **This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;**
17 **And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.**
18 Now where sins and iniquities have totally been remitted, there is no further need for sacrificial offerings.
19-22 Therefore, brethren, since we have the boldness to enter the [true] Holy of Holies through the blood of Jesus by a new and living way which he has opened for us through the curtain of *his* flesh--and since we have a High Priest over the Temple of God [in heaven]--let us come near with sincere hearts in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled [and cleansed] from our evil [fallen nature], and our bodies immersed in pure water.
23 Let us hold fast to the profession of our confidence without wavering, for He who promised us is faithful.
24 And let us inspire each other to love and good deeds,
25 Not forsaking our synagogues, as is the habit of some; but exhorting one another even more as we see Judgment Day approaching.
26 For if we [scorn repentance and] keep on sinning after we have known the truth, no sacrifice can save us from our sins!
27 All we can fearfully look forward to is the *judgment and fiery indignation* that will devour the adversaries.
28 [Remember that] a person who scorned the Law of Moses died without mercy at the word of two or three witnesses.
29 So how much greater punishment do you suppose that a man would deserve, who trampled down the Son of God, considering the blood of the covenant that sanctified him an unholy thing, and thereby insulting the Spirit of grace?
30 For we know Him who said: **Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord**. And also: **The Lord shall judge his people.**
31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!
32-33 So keep in mind the early days when you first came to enlightenment, and endured many hard afflictions against you at times when you were publicly singled out for reproach and affliction, either for yourselves or for other members of the Messianic community with whom you stood.
34 Back then, you had compassion for the imprisoned, and joyfully endured your goods being stripped from you [for your faith], knowing in yourselves that in heaven you have a much greater--and eternal--reward coming.
35 So do not cast away your confidence, which will obtain for you a great reward [for the persecution you're enduring in this life].
36 For you have need of patience, so that after you have done God's will, you can receive the promise.
37 For in a little while he who is coming shall come, and he will not delay.
38 Now [there is a verse that talks about escaping the coming judgment--through faith--that reads], **the just shall live by faith.** [But remember it goes on to say…] **but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.**
39 But we are *not* among those who draw back to perdition; we are in the group who believe [and press onward] to the saving of the soul!

HEBREWS CHAPTER 11

1 Now faith is a most sure warrant, a being of things hoped for, a demonstration of things not seen.
2 For it was by faith that the elders secured a good commendation [from God].
3 Because of our faith, we understand that the entire universe was created by God's spoken command, and that the things that we see came to be out of absolutely nothing.
4 By faith, Abel offered up to God a more appropriate and pleasing sacrifice than Cain, testifying to the fact that he was righteous, because God testified of his gift offerings. And even though he is long dead, his example [of being the first human ever placing faith

in the blood sacrifice of an unblemished sacrificial lamb] still speaks volumes to us!
5 Because Enoch had faith, he was taken elsewhere so that he would not die*; but he simply vanished because God snatched him away*. But before his translation, he had a testimony that he pleased God [because of his faith].
6 But without faith, it is utterly impossible to please God in any way, for he who comes to God must believe God is real, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him diligently.
7 Because he believed what he had been told, Noah--after being warned by God of things coming that he did not see happening yet, and which had never happened before--was moved with fear to build an ark that wound up saving his entire household. His obedience in doing this sealed the fate of the world, and also made him an heir of the right standing in God's sight that comes through believing.
8 Because Abraham believed, when he was commanded to go to a place he did not know--where he was promised an inheritance--he obeyed and went out, having no idea where he would wind up.
9 Because he believed, he became a nomad in the Land of Promise as if it were a totally alien country, [never settling down permanently, but] living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs along with him who had been given the same promise.
10 For Abraham never stopped seeking for a city mapped out and built by God Himself.
11 Through faith also, his wife Sarah received the ability to conceive a child, and delivered him long after she had gone through menopause, for she judged [God], who had promised her, to be faithful.
12 Therefore, *so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable*, sprang forth from a man so old he was [totally impotent, and] as good as dead.
13 Now all these great people died in faith, never having received the fullness of the promises made to them--but through the open eyes of faith they saw them afar off, believing and accepting them, and proclaiming themselves to be nothing more than strangers and nomads upon the earth.
14 For the people proclaiming that, who lived like nomads back then, were making a declaration to all that they were traveling on to a country they hadn't reached yet, but believed was awaiting them at the end of the journey.
15 And truly, if their hearts had remained behind in the country they had come out of, they may have been tempted to return there.
16 But they desired a better country--a heavenly one! That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has built a city for them to dwell in.
17 Because he believed what he had been told, Abraham--when God put *his* faith to the test--was willing to offer up Isaac on a sacrificial altar.
18 Now it was this same Isaac of whom God had said that**:** "**In Isaac shall thy seed be called.**"
19 So Abraham chose to believe God capable of even raising up Isaac from the dead--and, in a prophetic figure, Abraham [came to understand and place faith in what *Christ* would undergo]!
20 Because *he* had faith, that same Isaac later spoke prophetic blessings over Jacob and Esau.
21 Because *he* had faith, Jacob, when he was dying, blessed Joseph's two sons, *showing reverence while leaning upon his staff*.
21 [*Alternate reading*]: Because *he* had faith, Jacob, when he was dying, blessed Joseph's two sons, while *showing submission to the emblem atop Joseph's staff* [that represented his authority].
22 Because *he* had faith, Joseph, when he died in turn, made mention that the Israelites would leave Egypt, and he gave orders that his bones should be taken with them.
23 Because *his* parents had faith, Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months because they saw he was a handsome child--and they did not fear the fact Pharaoh had commanded the newborn sons to be killed.
24-26 Because *he* had faith, Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing instead to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than enjoying the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than those Egypt had to offer--for he kept his mind fixed on the reward of God.
27 Because *he* had faith, he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of Pharaoh--for his strength to endure came by believing in Him whom he could not see, but was as real to him as if he *did* see!
28 Because *he* had faith, he observed the Passover, and the sprinkling of blood on the doorways, lest the angel that destroyed the firstborn touch his people too.
29 Because *they* believed, the people passed through the Red Sea like dry land, while the Egyptians, trying to do likewise, drowned.
30 Because of faith, the walls of Jericho fell down after being marched around for seven days.
31 Because *she* believed, Rahab the prostitute did not die with the unbelievers, for she greeted the spies in peace.
32 What more can I say? I could go on, but there is no time to repeat the deeds of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephtah, David too, Samuel, and the prophets--
33-34 Who, through their faith, conquered kingdoms, ruled in righteousness, obtained promises God had made them, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword; or out of weakness were made strong, becoming valiant warriors, putting invading armies to flight.
35 There were women who received their dead back to life, while others *through* their faith underwent torture to death, refusing to save their lives by compromise so that they could obtain a better resurrection.
36 Another sort, *for* their faith, underwent trials of cruel mockings and whippings, and chains and imprisonment.
37 They were stoned, [Isaiah was] sawed in half; they suffered lack; they were slain by the sword; they wandered about in sheep and goatskins, being penniless, afflicted, and tormented.
38 These--of whom the world was not worthy--wandered about in deserts, mountains, dens, and caves in the earth.
39 But these all, having left behind a marvelous testimony because of their faith, did not receive the promise,
40 For God had in mind a better thing for us, so that they could not see perfection without us [and what we now walk in--the redemption of the Messiah].

HEBREWS CHAPTER 12

1 Given the fact that we have such a great legacy handed down to us by those who preceded us [--and since they may be watching how we will respond to that legacy--] let us cast away every hindrance, and the sin which is so easy to be caught up in, and let us run patiently the race set before us,
2 Focused only on Jesus at the finish line, the author and developer of our faith, who--for the joy set before him--endured the cross, scorning its shame, and by that came to sit at the right hand of the throne of God.
3 Keep in mind him who endured such torment at the hands of sinners against *himself*, lest *you* get weary [of enduring], and mentally abandon your own commitment.
4 *You* haven't resisted sin to the point of shedding your own blood!

5 But you have forgotten the exhortation written to you as sons of God: **My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:**
6 **For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.**
7 If you accept chastening, then God will treat you like a son. For what sort of son is never corrected by his father?
8 But if God is not punishing you for your misdeeds [--which befalls all of us--] then you are illegitimate children, and not true legal sons.
9 Furthermore, we all had earthly fathers who corrected us, and we still respected them. Shall we not even more be in subjection to the Father of *spirits*, and live?
10 For our fathers, in the short time we were children, spanked us as they saw fit [--and often because we simply irritated them]. But God disciplines we grown men for our benefit so that we can partake of His holiness.
11 Now no spanking seems good when it happens--in fact, it is grievous. But afterwards, it helps children to grow up and be people of good character [if they accept the correction].
12 So *snap to attention, lock your knees in place*, and stop sulking!
13 Start walking down the straight path, lest your weak knees become crippled altogether. It's better for them to be healed.
14 Seek peace with all men, and pursue holiness, without which no man will see the Lord.
15 Pursue it diligently, lest any man fall from God's grace and cause a root of bitterness to spring up among you that will defile many.
16 [Pursue it diligently,] lest anyone become sexually immoral, or else profane like Esau, who sold his entire birthright for one morsel of meat.
17 For you recall that he was sorry afterward, when he could have inherited the blessing, but was rejected. Things could not be undone even though he shed bitter tears over it.
18-19 Remember you haven't come to Mount Sinai, the *physical* mountain one could touch, which burned with fire and was overshadowed in blackness, darkness, a great wind, with the sound of a *shofar*, and a voice so frightening that the people begged not to hear any more words from it.
20 For those people could not bear what was commanded them: "**And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart.**"
21 This was all so fearsome that even Moses said, "I exceedingly fear and quake!"
22 But you are of those who have come instead to Mount Zion, to the very city of the Living God--the heavenly Jerusalem--where there is an innumerable group of angels.
23 You have been called to the great gathering and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to come to the God and Judge of all, and to the spirits of the just [dead] who have been made perfect.
24 And you have been called to Jesus--the mediator of the New covenant--and to the new sort of sprinkled blood that cries out much more positive words [of mercy and forgiveness] than the blood of Abel [that cried out for vengeance].
24 [*Alternate reading*]: And you have been called to Jesus--the mediator of the New covenant--and to the new sort of sprinkled blood that represents much better things than the blood of Abel's [fully approved-of] sacrifice.
25 See to it that you do not scorn Him who speaks to you. For if they did not escape [judgment], who rejected [God]--who then spoke on the earth--much less will *we* escape judgment if we turn away when He now speaks from heaven!
26 God's voice only shook the *earth* [back at Sinai], but He promises now: *Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also the universe.*
27 And this phrase, "*Yet once more*," signifies that the things shaken will be taken out of the way completely--but only those things that have been created will experience this, so that what remains will only be those things that are immovable and unshakable.
28 And so, since we are inheriting a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us in gratitude serve God with acceptable reverence and godly fear.
29 For our God is a consuming fire.

HEBREWS CHAPTER 13

1 Continue in brotherly love.
2 And don't forget to be hospitable to strangers, for some have done that and had angels as guests in their homes without realizing it.
3 Don't forget those who are imprisoned. Remember them as if you, yourselves, were jailed alongside them. Likewise, have compassion on those who suffer adversity as if *you* were the one undergoing the trial!
4 Let marriage be held as an honorable estate, and keep the marriage bed undefiled, for God will judge those who engage in sex outside of marriage.
5-6 Let your lifestyle be one that exhibits no greed, and be content with what you have. Remember, Jesus has said: **I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee**, so that we can boldly proclaim that, **The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.**
7 Take as example those with [spiritual] authority over you, who have proclaimed the Message of God to you. Imitate the traits of their mature faith, which are shown by their consistently godly lifestyles.
8 [For] "Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and forever!"
9 Don't be carried about with different, strange doctrines [about ritual eating of foods and the like]. For it is a good thing for the heart to be firm in its faith solely on the basis of grace, without polluting that grace by adding commandments regarding meats, which hasn't done those caught up in such ritual any good anyway.
10 We have a [Communion] altar to eat from that even the priests who serve in the Temple in Jerusalem have no right to eat from anyway!
11 For the carcasses of the animals whose blood is brought into the Sanctuary by the High Priest to atone for sin are burned **outside the camp**.
12 That is why Jesus also suffered outside the city gate [where the red heifer was sacrificed], so that he could sanctify the people with *his* own blood.
13 Let us therefore [leave Jerusalem and the system it represents,] and go forth to him who is **outside the camp**, enduring the same reproach Jerusalem had for him too.
14 For we have no city on earth to call our permanent home, but we seek the one that is to come.
15 Therefore, by Jesus, let us continually offer up the sacrifice of praise--the fruit from our lips--to God continually, giving thanks to His name.
16 But keep doing good deeds and remember to share, for with those sorts of sacrifices God is well pleased.
17 Obey those [in the church] who have [spiritual] authority over you, and submit to them, for they watch over your souls and must someday give an account. Let them do that with joy and not with grief, for that is unprofitable to you.

18 Pray for us, for we believe our consciences are clear, and that we are willing, in all ways, to live honestly.
19 I beg you especially to pray that I may be released to you all the sooner.
20-21 Now the God of peace--who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep--through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, developing in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.
22 And I [--the co-writer of this epistle--] beg you, brethren, to heed this message of exhortation, though I haven't written a great deal of it.
23 You should all know that our brother Timothy is set free, with whom I shall also come, if he journeys to you shortly.
24 Greet those who have rule over you, and all the righteous there. Those in Italy send greetings!
25 Grace be with you all. Amen.

2nd TIMOTHY

2nd TIMOTHY CHAPTER 1

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus,
2 To Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace to you, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.
3 I thank God--whom I serve with a clear conscience as did my forefathers--that I unceasingly remember you in my prayers, day and night,
4-5 Greatly wanting to see you when I remember your tears, that I may be filled with joy when I call to mind the sincere faith you have that first was in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure is in you too.
6 That is why I am reminding you to fan into fire the gift of God that was placed in you when I [laid hands on, and ordained you].
7 For God has not given us an attitude of fear--but of power, love, and a disciplined mind.
8-10 So do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me, his prisoner--but be willing to share my afflictions for the Gospel, relying on the power of God, who saved us and gave us a holy calling not for anything we have done, but for His own purpose, through His grace which was ordained for us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now manifested by the appearing of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who has abolished death, and through the Gospel has brought to light the way to life and immortality.
11 And it is this very Gospel to which I am appointed a preacher, apostle, and teacher of the Gentiles.
12 And it's also because of the Gospel that I am suffering these things. Even so, I am not ashamed, because I know in whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep safe [the Gospel message] he revealed to me, until that Day.
13 In the faith and love that is in Christ Jesus, hold fast, and conform yourself, to the sound teachings that you heard from me.
14 Keep safe, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, that good thing that was ordained to you to keep.
15 You already know that all who came with me from Turkey have turned away from me, including Phygellus and Hermogenes.
16 But may the Lord show mercy to the family of Onesiphorus, for he was often here as a breath of cool, fresh air, and was not ashamed of my chain.
17 In fact, when he arrived in Rome, he hunted everywhere until he found me.
18 May the Lord Jesus grant him mercy in that Day, for you know very well all he did to aid me in Ephesus.

2nd TIMOTHY CHAPTER 2

1 Therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.
2 And the teachings you heard me proclaim among many witnesses--impart these to faithful men with the ability to teach them to others also.
3 Endure hardship well, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ should.
4 No man who goes to war worries about the pragmatic, day-to-day concerns of life in order to be pleasing to the commander who drafted him.
5 And no one in a race wins the crown unless he plays by the rules.
6 The vinedresser who works in the vineyard must be the first to sample the fruits.
7 Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in everything.
8 Never forget the foundation of what I proclaim: That Jesus Christ, of David's lineage, was raised from the dead according to my Gospel:
9 And that is why I am treated like some evildoer, being placed in chains--but the Message of God is not hindered or chained in any way!
10 Therefore, I endure everything for the sake of the elect so that they may also obtain salvation and eternal glory through Christ Jesus.
11 You can believe this saying: *If we die with him, we shall certainly live with him.*
12 *If we endure for him, we shall also reign with him. But if we deny him, he will deny us.*
13 *Even if we lose faith, he is still faithful, for he cannot deny himself.*
14 Emphasize this to the ones you select, and charge them before the Lord not to get into wordy arguments which only destroy those who are listening.
15 Strive to show yourself approved of God, and be a workman who has no reason to be ashamed, correctly teaching and handling the Message of truth.
16 But avoid pointless arguments, for they will only lead to more ungodliness,
17 And will rot like gangrene among the congregation. Hymenaeus and Philetus are two good examples of this,
18 Who, so far as the truth is concerned, have strayed from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already occurred. They and their teachings are overthrowing some people's faith.
19 Even so, the foundation stone of God is still standing secure, with this inscription on it: *The Lord knows those who are His*. And: *Let every one that names the name of Christ depart from iniquity*.
20 In a great house, there are not only containers of gold and silver, but also containers of wood and clay. And some are used for important purposes, and some are [chamber pots].
21 If a man purges himself from the things I've been warning about, he shall be a container of importance, set apart and available for the Master to use in every good work of his.
22 Flee also from youthful desires. Instead, with all those who call upon the Lord with a pure heart, pursue righteousness, faith, charity, and peace.
23 But avoid foolish and ignorant questions, knowing they only create strife.
24 And the slave of the Lord must not be in strife, but must be soft-spoken to all men, able to teach, able to turn the other cheek,
25 Meekly correcting those who oppose him in hope God will sober up their thinking, that they may repent, and acknowledge the truth,
26 And by this escape the snare of the devil, who takes the unsaved captive at his will.

2nd TIMOTHY CHAPTER 3

1 You should also know this: In the last days of this Age [just before the Messianic Age begins], very violent times will come.
2 [These times will be marked by unprecedented selfishness and self-gratification.] Men will not care about anyone but themselves; their only love will be for material things. They will be loud-mouthed. They will be arrogant. They will be blasphemous. Disobedient to their parents. Unthankful. Unholy.
3 They will not even have love for others in their family. They won't keep their word. Slander will flow from their lips like water. Self-control will be a totally alien concept to them. They will be violent. They will hate anything or anyone good.
4 They will be traitors. They will be reckless. They will be haughty. They will love pleasure rather than God.

5 They will have an outward form of being religious, but will deny the true power of God [to change the *inside*]. Turn your back on these sorts of people.
6 For people like this are the sort who creep into houses and take captive silly women who, in their sinful lust, crave fantasy in place of reality.
7 Such women think they're always "learning" from them--but they never learn enough to come to the truth.
7 [*Alternate reading*]: These men think they're always "learning"--but they never learn enough to come to the truth!
8 Now as Pharaoh's magicians, Jannes and Jambres, opposed Moses, so these men also stand against the truth. They are men of corrupt minds, and are heretics so far as the true Christian faith goes.
9 But they will prosper no longer, for their folly will be shown to all men for what it is, just as happened with the magicians.
10-11 But you have been made fully aware of my doctrine, and have seen my lifestyle, goals, faith, perseverance, charity, patience, persecutions, and afflictions that befell me at Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. Yes, those were horrible persecutions I went through, but the Lord delivered me from all of them.
12 And yes, all in Christ Jesus who live godly will suffer persecution.
13 But evil men and impostors shall get worse and worse, deceiving others while sinking into deeper deception themselves.
14 But continue in what *you* have learned and been assured of is the truth, mindful of who taught you.
15 From the time you were a babe, you have also known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise, leading to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.
16 All Scripture, in fact, is given through the inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for confronting one about his sin, for correction, and to instruct one in godly living,
17 So that the man of God may be mature and thoroughly equipped to perform all sorts of good works.

2nd TIMOTHY CHAPTER 4

1 I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at his appearance and the ushering in of his Kingdom,
2 That you preach the Message, and that you are ready, whether the Message will be received or rejected, to patiently reprove, rebuke, and exhort, in accordance with sound doctrine.
3 For the time will come when people will not accept sound doctrine. Instead, to justify their own selfish desires, they will find teachers to say what they want to hear.
4 They will stuff cotton into their ears to avoid hearing the truth, and instead open their ears to myths.
5 But be steadfast in everything that is true. Endure afflictions. Do the work of an evangelist, and fulfill your ministry.
6 For I am ready to be offered up, and the time of my departure is at hand.
7 I have fought a good fight...
I have finished the race…
I have guarded the faith.
8 And now there is a crown of righteousness awaiting me, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will present to me on that day. And I won't be the only one to get one--all who love his appearance will receive crowns too!
9 Do all you can to get here quickly,
10 For Demas has abandoned me, having had more love for the things of this world than the Gospel, and left for Thessalonica. Crescens is gone to Galatia, and Titus has left for Dalmatia.
11 Only Luke has remained behind with me. Find Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in the ministry.
12 I have sent Tychicus to Ephesus.
13 Bring the [scroll case] I left with Carpus at Troas when you come, along with the scrolls, and especially the parchments in it.
14 Alexander the coppersmith did much evil to me [with his testimony to the Romans that put me here]--may God give him the reward he deserves for it!
15 You watch out for him, for he has greatly opposed our teachings.
16 At my first appearance before the Praetorian Praefect no one stood with me, and I was all alone, for they all abandoned me. I pray God not hold that sin against them.
17 Even so, the *Lord* stood with me and strengthened me so that through me the Gospel message might be fully proclaimed to the Gentiles. So that time, anyway, I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.
18 And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil plot, and will preserve me until I enter his heavenly kingdom. Glory to him forever and ever! Amen.
19 Greet Priscilla and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus.
20 Erastus stayed at Corinth, but I had to leave Trophimus sick at Miletus.
21 Do all you can to get here before winter. Eubulus sends greeting, along with Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brethren.
22 The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Grace be with you. Amen.

1st John

1st JOHN CHAPTER 1

1-2 e who was from the beginning...
Whom we have heard...
Whom we have heard...
Whom we have seen with our eyes...
Whom we have looked upon...
Whom our hands have actually handled…
Yes, the things we saw and heard from the Word of Life--for the Life was manifested, and we have seen it--we now bear witness of, and proclaim to you that eternal life who was with the Father and was manifested to us.
3 Yes, that which we have seen and heard we proclaim to you, that you may also have fellowship with us. And truly our common fellowship is with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.
4 And we write what we do to you, so that your joy may be full.
5 This, then, is the message we have heard from Him, and proclaim to you: God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all!
6 And so if we claim to have fellowship with Him but yet walk in darkness, we are lying and do not [walk in] truth.
7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we are united together, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son is cleansing us from every sin!
8 If we deny we have sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.
9 But if we confess our sins, He is faithful and true to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His Word is not in us.

1st JOHN CHAPTER 2

1 My little children, I write these things to you so that you do not sin. But if any man does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous.
2 And he is the atoning payment for not only our sins, but also for the sins of the whole world.
3 Here is how we can be sure that we truly know him: if we obey what he has commanded us to do.
4 He who says, “I know him,” but yet does not obey his commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him.
5 But whoever keeps his word is the person in whom the love of God is truly perfected. And that is how we can know that we are in him.
6 He who claims to abide in him should prove that by walking in the same way Christ walked.
7 Beloved, [in saying this,] I am not writing any new commandment to you--I simply repeat an old commandment you heard from the beginning. The old commandment I speak of [--to love each other--] is the teaching you have had from the beginning.
8 But in a sense, I write you a new commandment which is true both in him and in you, because the darkness is past and the true Light now shines:
9 He who says he is in the Light, yet hates his brother, is still in darkness.
10 He who loves his brother abides in the Light, and there is nothing in him that will cause himself, or others, to stumble.
11 But he who hates his brother is in darkness, and walks in darkness, and doesn’t know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.
12 I write to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for [Christ’s] name’s sake.
13 I write to you, fathers, because you have known [Christ,] who is from the beginning. I write to you, younger men, because you have conquered the Wicked One. I write to you, little children, because you have known the Father.
14 [I repeat:] I wrote to you fathers because you have come to know Christ, who is from the beginning. I wrote to you younger men because you are strong, and the Message of God abides in you, and you have conquered the Wicked One.
15 Love not the world, nor the things in the
world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.
16 For all that is in the world--the things the flesh lusts for...the things the eyes lust for...the pride over transitory accomplishments and material things--none of this is of the Father, but is of the [unsaved] world.
17 And the world will pass away, along with the things in it people think they want--but he who does the will of God will abide forever.
18 Little children, it is the last time, and as you have heard, the Antichrist is coming. Even now, there are many [lesser] antichrists in the world--and this is how we know this is the last time.
19 These [traitors] went out from us, but they were not a part of us--for if they had been of us, they undoubtedly would have continued on with us. But they went out so that they could clearly show that they were not all from us [and our ways].
20 But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all that you need to know.
21 I have not written to you because you do not know the truth; I have written because you *do* know it, and know that no lie springs *from* truth!
22 Who is a liar, but the one denying that Jesus is the Messiah?! He is the antichrist who denies Father-*and*-Son!
23 And whoever denies the Son, does not have the Father. But he who acknowledges the Son has the Father as well.
24 So let the Message abide in you that you heard from the beginning. If the Message you heard from the beginning remains in you, you shall continue in the Son *and* in the Father.
25 And this is the promise [Christ] has made to us: even eternal life!
26 I have written these things to you because of those trying to seduce you [away from the true faith].
27 But the anointing that you received from [Christ] lives in you, and you don’t need any man to teach you these things--the anointing leads you to, and teaches you, truth. The anointing is truth, and is no lie. And as it has taught you, you shall abide in [Christ].
28 And now, little children, abide in [Christ], that when he appears we may be bold, rather than being ashamed in his presence when he comes.
29 If you know that he is righteous, then you know that every believer who does righteous things is born from [Christ].

1st JOHN CHAPTER 3

1 Imagine what incredible love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God! Therefore, the world doesn’t know us because it didn’t know God either.
2 Beloved, we are even now the children of God, and though we don’t know yet what our ultimate form will be like, we do know that when Christ appears we will be like he is, for we shall see him as he actually is!
3 And every man who has this confidence in him purifies himself even as [Christ] is pure.
4 Everyone who is practicing sin is also willfully transgressing the Law, for to [willfully] sin is to live in lawlessness.
5 And you know that [Christ] was manifested to take away our sins, and there is no sin in him.

6 Whoever abides in him does not walk in sin. Whoever walks in sin has neither seen nor known him.
7 Little children, don't let any man fool you--he who [habitually] does right things, does them because he is righteous as [Christ] is righteous.
8 He who [habitually] commits sin is of the devil, for the devil sinned from the beginning. And this is why the Son of God was manifested: that he might totally destroy the accomplishments of the devil!
9 Whoever is born of God does not [habitually] walk in sin, for God's sperm remains in him, and he cannot [remain a sinner] because he is born of God.
10 This is how the children of both God and the devil are seen for what they are: Whoever does not live and act righteously is not of God, and neither is a man who does not love his brother Christians.
11 For again, this was the Message that you heard from the beginning: that we should love one another.
12 You should not be like Cain, who was of the Wicked One, and slew his brother Abel. And why did he slay him? Because his own deeds were evil, while his brother's were righteous [and so he did what came naturally out of his evil, Satan-inspired heart].
13 So don't be amazed that the world hates you.
14 We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love our fellow brethren. He who does not love his brother is living in a state of death.
15 Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life dwelling in him.
16 We know what God's sort of love is like because [Jesus] showed us by laying down his life for us. In like manner, we should be ready to lay our lives down for our brethren.
17 But if a man is rich in temporal things and turns his head when he sees his brother in need--how can it be said that the love of God dwells in him?
18 My little children, let us not pay lip service to love--let us demonstrate it by deeds and truth!
19 Having these attitudes, and doing these things, is how we can know we are of the truth and settle our hearts before Him.
20 For if our conscience condemns us, it is because God is greater than our conscience, and knows all things.
21 But, beloved, if our conscience is clear, then we have confidence toward God,
22 And whatever we ask for [in prayer] we receive because we keep his commands and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.
23 And this is God's commandment: that we first should believe on the person and position of His Son, Jesus Christ; and then always love each other, just as He commanded us to do.
24 And he who keeps God's commands dwells in God, and God in him. And this is how we know that God abides in us--by the Holy Spirit, Whom He has given us.

1st JOHN CHAPTER 4

1 Beloved, don't believe every [teaching] you hear, but test those [teachings] to see if they are of God, for many false prophets are gone out into the world.
2 This is how you can recognize something from the Spirit of God: Every [teaching] that affirms that Jesus Christ has come in human flesh to the earth is of God.
3 And every [teaching] that denies the full humanity of Jesus Christ is not of God--it is the [teaching] of Antichrist, whom you have heard is coming, and who, even now, is in the world.
4 You are of God, little children, and have overcome [the false teachers], because greater is [God] who is within you, than any [man] who is in the world.
5 The [false teachers] are of the world, and thus they speak in the world's way, and the world listens to them.
6 But we are of God, and he who knows God, listens to us. He who is not of God does not listen to us. That's how we know the difference between the Spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.
7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love was invented by God, and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.
8 He who does not love, does not know God, for God is love.
9 And this was how God showed his love for us: He sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.
10 And this is true love--not that we have loved God, but that He loved *us*, and sent His Son to be payment for our sins.
11 Beloved, if God loved us like this, we should, in turn, love one another the same way!
12 Now no man has ever seen God at any time [but the Son has revealed Him]. If we love one another, God dwells in us, and His love is perfected in us.
13 This is how we know that we dwell in Him, and He in us: Because He has given us His Spirit [to perfect love in us].
14 And we have seen and testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.
15 Whoever shall confess that Jesus is [the Messiah and] Son of God--God dwells in that person, and he dwells in God!
16 And we have known and believed the love God has for us. God is love, and he who dwells in love dwells in God, and God dwells in him.
17 When our love is perfected through our abiding in Him, we can have boldness in the Day of Judgment--because, in this world, we are exactly as He is.
18 There is no fear in love, for perfected love drives out fear--and fear means we're afraid of judgment. He who fears has not perfected his love yet.
19 We love Him because he first loved us.
20 If a man says, "I love God," yet he hates his brother, he is a liar--for how can someone who does not love a brother he can see with his eyes, love a God whom he cannot see?
21 And God has left us this commandment: He who loves God should love his brother as well.

1st JOHN CHAPTER 5

1 Whoever believes that Jesus is the Messiah is born of God, and everyone who loves He who begat the Son, loves the Son who was begotten by Him.
2 This is how we know that we love God's children: when we love God and keep His commands.
3 For this is how we show that we love God: we obey what He has commanded us to do. And what He has commanded us to do is not grievous.
4 For whoever is born of God rises above the world. And this is what gives us the victory over the world: our faith.
5 Who is him who overcomes the world but he who believes that Jesus is [Messiah and King]?
6 This is he who came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ, who came not only by water, but by water *and* blood. And it is the Holy Spirit that testifies to this, because the Spirit is truth.
7 For there are three that testify in heaven: The Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are One!
8 And there are three who testify on earth: The Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one.
9 If we accept the testimony of men, the testimony of God is even greater, for this is the testimony of God that He has testified of His Son.

10 He who believes on the Son has that testimony in himself. But he who does not believe God, has made God out to be a liar because he has refused to believe the testimony God gave regarding His Son.
11 And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in [and comes through] His Son.
12 He who has the Son has life. He who does not have the Son does not have life.
13 These things I have written to you who believe on the person and position of the Son of God--so that you may know you have eternal life, and that you may keep believing on the person and position of the Son of God.
14 And we have this assurance in him: that if we ask anything that is accord with his will, he hears us.
15 And if we know he hears us when we ask for something, then we know we will have those things we have asked for.
16 [Now--] if any man observes his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death, he shall ask, and [God] shall grant life for a sin that is not one leading to death. Now there is a sin that *does* lead to death, and I do not say that you should pray for that sort of sin.
17 All unrighteousness is sin, but there are sins that do not lead to [spiritual] death.
18 We know that whoever is born of God does not walk in ongoing sin; but [Christ], who is begotten of God, keeps him secure, and the Wicked One cannot touch him.
19 And we know that we are of God, while conversely the whole world is under the Wicked One.
20 And we know that the Son of God has come and given us understanding, so that we can know God, who is true; and that we are in him who is [also] true--even His son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.
21 Little children, keep yourselves away from idols. Amen.

2nd John

2nd JOHN CHAPTER 1

1 The elder unto the elect Cyria and her children, whom I love in the truth, along with all those who have likewise known the truth,
2 A truth that lives inside of us, and that will be with us forever.
3 Grace, mercy, and peace be with you who walk in truth and love, from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father.
4 I greatly rejoiced when I found your children walking in truth as the Father commanded us to.
5 And now I beseech you, lady--not as if I were writing anything new rather than what we have known from the beginning: that we love one another.
6 And this is love--that we walk after what he has commanded us to do. [And to love is] that commandment, which you have heard from the beginning, and should continue to walk in.
7 For many deceivers are come into the world, who deny that Jesus the Messiah was a human man. Such a person is a deceiver and an antichrist.
8 Remain steadfast, lest we lose the things for which we have fought, so that we receive a complete reward.
9 Whoever goes beyond the foundations of doctrinal truth [about the nature of Christ], and does not remain in the doctrine of Christ, does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.
10-11 If anyone comes to you and does not hold this doctrine, don't let him into your [church], and don't wish him Godspeed. For someone who [invokes the customary blessing] on such a person makes himself a partaker of his evil deeds.
10-11. [*Alternate reading*]: If anyone comes to you and does not hold this doctrine, don't let him into your [church], and don't rejoice with him [in fellowship and worship]. For someone who rejoices with such a person [as a brother] makes himself a partaker of his evil deeds.
12 I have many things I could write to you, but I don't want to trust them to paper and ink. Instead, I trust that I can come speak to you all personally, that our joy may be full.
13 The children of your elect sister church send greetings.

3rd John

3rd JOHN CHAPTER 1

1 The elder unto the well beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth.
2 Beloved, I wish above everything else, that you would prosper and be in good health, just as much as your soul is prospering.
3 For I greatly rejoiced when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, and how you are walking in it.
4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.
5 Beloved, you are certainly showing faithfulness when you do something good on behalf of brethren who are strangers to you.
6 Some you've helped have come here, and told the church of your generosity. It is to your credit to continue sending such men on to where they're going in a way God would approve of.
7 For they went out for the sake of the name of Christ, taking no aid from the pagans.
8 We should therefore receive [and aid] such people, that we may be fellow helpers in the truth.
9 I wrote to the church there earlier, but Diotrephes, who loves to lord it over the flock
there, does not submit to our authority.
10 And so, if I come there, I will remember the things he has done, and how he has slandered us with malicious words. And even that wasn't enough for him, for he rejected the [other] brethren [we sent out], and excommunicated those of the church who *did* receive them!
11 Beloved, follow not that which is evil--follow that which is good! He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has never even seen God.
12 Demetrius has a good reputation among everyone, including the Truth itself. And we also bear record of his character, and you know our testimony is truthful!
13 I have many things I could write to you, but I don't want to trust them to paper and ink.
14 Instead, I trust that I can soon come speak to you face to face. Peace to you. Our friends send greeting. Greet the friends there by name.

Revelation

REVELATION CHAPTER 1

1 This is the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to show His servants the things that must shortly come to pass. He sent this message and assigned an angel to deliver it to His servant John,
2 Who bore record of the Message of God, and testified about Jesus Christ, and about all the things he saw.
3 Blessed is he who reads, and those who understand, and those who keep what is written in the words of this prophecy, for the epoch is at hand.
4 John: to the seven churches in Turkey. Grace and peace be to you from God who is, and was, and is to come; and [grace and peace also] from the seven Spirits that are before his throne;
5 And [grace and peace] from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten from the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. To he who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,
6 And who has made us kings and priests unto God his Father--to him be glory and dominion forever and ever! Amen.
7 Behold, he is coming with clouds, and every eye will see him--including those who pierced him. And all the peoples of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, amen.
8 I am the Alpha and Omega--the Beginning and the End, says the Lord, who is, and was, and is to come--the Almighty!
9 I John, who am also your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and perseverance of Jesus Christ, was on the island called Patmos, exiled there for the
Message of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.
10 I was in the spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice like a *shofar*,
11 Saying: I am the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last! What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches that are in Turkey: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.
12 And I turned to look at the voice that spoke to me. When I turned, I saw seven golden menorahs.
13 In the midst of the menorahs was one like the Son of Man [--the *bar Enash* Daniel prophesied about--] clothed with a robe down to the foot, and a golden belt about his waist.
14 His head and hair were white like wool--and white as snow! And his eyes were like flames of fire!
15 And his feet were like fine brass, as if they had been forged in a furnace; and his voice was as the sound of many waterfalls!
16 He had seven stars in his right hand, and out of his mouth came a sharp, double-edged sword. His countenance was like the sun shining in all its strength!
17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he laid his right hand upon me, saying: Fear not--I am the First and the Last!
18 I am he who lives, and was dead! Behold, I am alive forevermore, amen! And I have the keys [of authority] over both death and *Sheol*.
19 Write down what you have seen, the things you are seeing, and the things you shall see:
20 The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden menorahs. The seven stars are the [Overseers] of the seven churches; and the seven menorahs are the seven churches themselves.

REVELATION CHAPTER 2

1 To the [Overseer] of the church at Ephesus, write: These things says he who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden menorahs:
2 I know your deeds, and your work, and your persistence, and how you cannot bear those who are evil; and the fact that you have tested those who claim to be apostles--though they aren't--and have found them to be liars.
3 You have borne up patiently, and for the sake of who and what I am you have worked and not grown weary.
4 Nevertheless, I have a grievance against you for the fact that you have left your first love.
5 Go back and remember where you fell from. Repent, and do the first deeds, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your menorah out of its place unless you repent.
6 But this you have going for you--you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I hate as well.
7 He who has an ear, let him understand what the Spirit says to the churches: To him who overcomes, I will give fruit to eat from the Tree of Life that is in the middle of the Paradise God created.
8 To the [Overseer] at the church of Smyrna, write: These things says the First and the Last, who was dead and is now alive:
9 I know your deeds, trials, and poverty--though you are truly rich! And I know the slanderous things said about you by those who claim to be Jews, but are not, and rather are from the synagogue of Satan.
10 Don't be afraid of the things you will suffer! Behold--the devil will cast some of you into dungeons, that you may be tested. You will have tribulation for ten days. But be faithful to death, and I will give you a crown of life.
11 He who has an ear, let him understand what the Spirit says to the churches: Him who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.
12 And to the [Overseer] at Pergamos, write: These things says he who has the sharp, double-edged sword:
13 I know your works, and where you dwell--even where Satan's throne is [on a mountain above the city]! I know you have held fast to my name, and have not denied your faith in me, even as in the days when Antipas, my faithful martyr, was slain among you there, in the place Satan dwells.
14 But I have a few grievances against you, because you have among you some who hold to the ways of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, instructing them to [idolatrously] eat things offered up to idols, and to commit sexual sin.
15 You also have some there who hold the doctrines of the Nicolaitans, doctrines that I hate.
16 Repent, or I will come to you quickly, and unleash all out war against these with the sword of my mouth!
17 He who has an ear, let him understand what the Spirit says to the churches: To him who overcomes, I will give to eat of the "hidden manna," and will give him a white [voting pebble to show I have declared him innocent], and on it a new name inscribed that no one knows but he who receives it.
18 And to the [Overseer] at the church at Thyatira, write: These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like flaming fire, and feet like fine brass:
19 I know your deeds, love, acts of service, faith, perseverance; and how you are even more zealous of these now than you were in the beginning.
20 But I still have some grievances regarding you, because you allow that woman named Jezebel--who calls herself a prophetess--to teach and seduce my servants to commit sexual sin, and to [idolatrously] eat things offered up to idols.
21 I gave her some time to repent of her [physical and spiritual] fornication, but she would not.

22 Behold--I will cast her into a sick bed; and those who commit [physical and spiritual] sin at her behest I will send into great tribulation unless they repent of their deeds.
23 And I will slay her children to death; and all the churches will know that I am he who searches out the thoughts and hearts; and I will give to every one of you according to what you have done.
24 But I say to you, and to the rest in Thyatira--as many as reject her doctrine, and have not plumbed the depths of Satan [the so-called "deep mysteries"] she and hers tell you of--that I will lay no greater burden upon you.
25 But that [truth] which you already have--hold fast until I come.
26 And him who overcomes, and continues to do what I have shown to do to the end--to him will I give power over the [Gentile] nations.
27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron. As the pots of a potter, the nations will be broken into shards with the same authority as I have received from my Father.
28 And I will also give him the Morning Star.
29 He who has an ear, let him understand what the Spirit says to the churches.

REVELATION CHAPTER 3

1 To the [Overseer] of the church at Sardis, write: These things says he who has the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars: I know your deeds, and that you have a reputation for being alive, though you are dead.
2 Be watchful, and strengthen the good things remaining in you which are about to die, for I have not found your deeds acceptable before God.
3 So remember how you first received and heard [the truth]. Hold fast to that, and repent. If you do not stay on watch, I will come upon you as a thief in the night, and you won't know what hour I will come upon you.
4 You have a few people even in Sardis who have not defiled their robes, and they will walk with me clothed in white, for they are worthy.
5 Him who overcomes shall be clothed in white clothing, and I will not blot his name out of the Scroll of Life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before His angels.
6 He who has an ear, let him understand what the Spirit says to the churches.
7 To the [Overseer] of the church at Philadelphia, write: These things says he that is holy, true, and who has the key of David--who is the one who opens and no man shuts; and shuts, and no man opens.
8 I know your deeds. Behold, I have set before you an open door, and no man can close it, for you have a little strength, and have kept my word, and have not denied who and what I am.
9 Behold--I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews, yet who are not, but rather lie--to come and do obeisance before your feet, and cause them to know that I have loved you.
10 Because you all have followed my example of perseverance, I will also keep you from the hour of temptation that shall come upon the entire world to test those who dwell upon the earth.
11 Behold, I come in a flash! Hold fast to what you have, that no man steals your crown.
12 Him who overcomes will I make a pillar in the Temple of my God, and he shall no longer have to depart from it. I will write upon him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God--the new Jerusalem--which comes down from my God in heaven; and I will write upon him my new name.
13 He who has an ear, let him understand what the Spirit says to the churches.
14 To the [Overseer] at the church of the Laodiceans, write: These things say the Amen...the faithful and true witness...the source of the things created by God:
15 I know your deeds, that you are neither hot nor cold. How I wish you were either one or the other!
16 So then, because you are lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of my mouth,
17 Because you say: "I am rich, and have an abundance of goods, and have need of nothing." All the while, you do not realize that you are, in fact, wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.
18 I advise you to buy from me the gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white clothing, that you may be dressed [in my righteousness], that the shame of your nakedness is covered; and obtain *my* sort of salve for your bad eyes that you may see!
19 As many as I love, I rebuke and punish, so be zealous, and repent!
20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock. If any man hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with me.
21 To him who overcomes will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I overcame, and have sat down with my Father on *His* throne!
22 He who has an ear, let him understand what the Spirit says to the churches.

REVELATION CHAPTER 4

1 After this, I looked--and behold! A door opened up in heaven, and the first voice I heard sounded like a *shofar*. It talked to me, saying: Come up here, and I will show you things that must come to pass!
2 And immediately, I was [out of the body,] in the spirit, and behold--I saw a throne in heaven, and one sat upon the throne.
3 And He who sat upon it was dazzling as jasper and sardine gemstones; and there was a rainbow around the throne that looked like an emerald.
4 And encircling the throne were twenty-four thrones, and upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and upon their heads were crowns of gold.
5 And out of the throne came lightning bolts, thunders, and voices. And there were seven menorahs burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.
6 And in front of the throne was a sea of glass like crystal, and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four [sphinxes] with eyes in their front and in their back.
7 The first [sphinx] was like a lion. The second was like a calf. The third had a man's face. The fourth was like a flying eagle.
8 And the four [sphinxes] each had six wings, and they possess eyes all about their bodies. These never rest, but day and night repeat the words: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.
9 And when these [sphinxes] gave glory and honor and thanks to Him who sat upon the throne, who lives forever and ever,
10 The twenty-four elders fell down before Him who sat on the throne; and they worshipped Him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying:
11 You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, honor and power--for you created all things, and for your pleasure they exist, and were created.

REVELATION CHAPTER 5

1 And I saw a scroll that was written on both sides and sealed with seven seals being held in the right hand of God who sat on the throne.

2 Then I observed a powerful angel proclaim with a loud voice: Who is worthy to open the scroll, and break its seals?
3 But no man in heaven, nor on earth, nor in *Sheol* was able to open the scroll or read it.
4 And I wept very much, because no man was found worthy to open the scroll or look in it.
5 Then one of the elders said to me: Weep not! Behold--the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has prevailed to unroll the scroll, and break its seals.
6 And I looked, and there--in the midst of the throne and the four [sphinxes], and amidst the elders--stood a Lamb that looked to have been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God that are sent forth throughout the earth.
7 And he came and took the book out of the right hand of [God] who sat upon the throne.
8 When he took the book, the four [sphinxes] and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. They all had harps, and golden censers of incense, which are the prayers of the righteous.
9 And they sang a new song, saying: You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals--for you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by your blood, out of every family, tongue, people, and nation;
10 And you have made us kings and priests unto our God--and we shall reign upon the earth.
11 And I looked, and I heard the voices of many angels round about the throne and the [sphinxes] and the elders; and they were innumerable--ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands of them!
12 They said with a loud voice: Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, riches, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, and blessing!
13 And every creature that is in heaven, and on the earth, and in *Sheol*, together with those in the sea--all that are in these realms--I heard saying: Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be to [God] who sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever!
14 And the four [sphinxes] said: Amen! Then the twenty-four elders fell down and did obeisance to Him who lives forever and ever.

REVELATION CHAPTER 6

1 And I saw the Lamb open one of the seals. Then I heard a noise like thunder, which was one of the four [sphinxes] saying: Come and see!
2 And I beheld a white horse, and he who sat upon him had a bow. A crown was given to him, and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.
3 When he opened the second seal, I heard the second [sphinx] say: Come and see!
4 And there went out another horse that was red--and power was given to him that sat upon it to take peace from the earth; and that men should kill each other--and he was given a great sword.
5 And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third [sphinx] say: Come and see! And I beheld a black horse, and the man upon it had a pair of scales in one hand.
6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four [sphinxes] say: [One day's food for one day's wages]--and see that you do not hurt the oil and the wine!
7 And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth [sphinx] say: Come and see!
8 And I looked, and beheld a sickly green horse, and the name of the man who sat upon it was DEATH--and *Sheol* followed him. Power was given them over a quarter of the earth, to kill with sword, hunger, death, and with the wild animals of the earth.
9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the Message of God, and for the testimony that they had lived out.
10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying: How long, O Lord, holy and true, do you not judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?
11 Meanwhile, white robes were given to every one of them, and they were told that they should rest for a little while, until their fellow servants and brethren who were destined to be killed as they were should complete what had been assigned for them.
12 And I beheld, when he opened the sixth seal, a great earthquake. And the sun became black as goatskin, and the moon became red as blood.
13 And the stars in the heavens fell to the earth, even as a fig tree casts its fruit early when a great wind shakes it.
14 And the heavens vanished like a scroll being rolled up, and every mountain and island moved from its place [from the force of the earthquake].
15 And the kings of the earth, and the important men, and the rich men, and the chief military officers, and the mighty men, and every slave, and every free man hid themselves in the caves and rocks of the mountains.
16 They said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the sight of God who sits upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb!
17 For the great day of His wrath has finally come, and who will be able to stand it?!

REVELATION CHAPTER 7

1 And after these things I saw four angels standing upon the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that it should not blow on the earth, the sea, nor on any tree.
2 And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the Living God, and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels who had permission to hurt the earth and the sea,
3 Saying: Do not hurt the earth, nor the sea, nor the trees until we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.
4 And I heard the number of those who were sealed--there were sealed a total of one hundred forty-four thousand from all the tribes of Israel.
5 From Judah were sealed twelve thousand. From Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. From Gad were sealed twelve thousand.
6 From Asher were sealed twelve thousand. From Napthali were sealed twelve thousand. From Manasseh were sealed twelve thousand.
7 From Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. From Levi were sealed twelve thousand. From Isachaar were sealed twelve thousand.
8 From Zebulon were sealed twelve thousand. From Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. From Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.
9 After this, I beheld a great multitude that no man could number from all nations, families, people and tongues standing before the throne and the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes, and had palm branches in their hands.
10 They cried with a loud voice, saying: Salvation to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!
11 And all the angels stood roundabout the throne, and about the four elders and the four [sphinxes]; and they fell before the throne on their faces and did obeisance to God,
12 Saying: Amen! Blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honor, power, and might be unto our God forever and ever! Amen!
13 And one of the elders answered, saying: Who are these dressed in the white robes, and where do they come from?

14 And I told him, Sir--you would know better than I! And he said to me: These are they who have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.
15 Therefore, they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His Temple--and He who sits on the throne shall dwell among them.
16 And they shall hunger no more, neither shall they thirst, neither shall the sun shine on them with its heat.
17 For the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them to the fountains of life; and God shall wipe away all their tears from their eyes!

REVELATION CHAPTER 8

1 And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about a half an hour.
2 And I saw the seven angels that stood before God, and they were given seven silver *shofars*.
3 And another angel came and stood at the altar who had a golden censer. He was given much incense with the intention that he should offer it, together with the prayers of the righteous, upon the golden altar that was before the throne.
4 And the smoke of the incense, which arose together with the prayers of the righteous, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.
5 And then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar, and cast it to the earth. Then there were voices, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake.
6 And the seven angels with the seven *shofars* readied themselves to sound them.
7 The first angel blew his *shofar*, and there came forth hail and fire mixed with blood--and they were cast upon the earth. A third part of the trees was burned up, along with all the green grass.
8 Then the second angel blew, and [an asteroid] that burned with fire was cast into the sea; and a third part of the sea turned to blood.
9 And a third of the creatures living in the sea died, and a third of the world's ships were destroyed.
10 The third angel blew, and a great star fell from the heavens, burning like a lamp as it fell, and it struck a third part of the waters, and upon the springs of waters.
11 The name of the star was Wormwood, and it turned a third of the earth's waters to [poison], and many men died because of the bitter waters.
12 The fourth angel then blew, and a third of the sun was smitten, and a third of the moon, and a third of the stars--and these grew dark. The daylight even did not show for a third of the time, nor was there light in the nighttime sky for a third of the night.
13 And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the heavens, crying out with a loud voice, saying: Woe! Woe! Woe to the people of the earth for the shofar blasts of the three angels yet to blow!

REVELATION CHAPTER 9

1 Now the fifth angel blew, and I saw a star fall from the heavens to the earth--and to this being was given the key to the Bottomless Pit.
2 And it opened the Bottomless Pit, and a great smoke arose from it, and the sun and air were darkened from the great volume of smoke that arose from the Pit.
3 And out of the smoke came locusts upon the earth, and they were given power even as the earth's scorpions have power.
4 They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, nor any green plant, nor any tree--but they were only to hurt those men who do not have the seal of God in their foreheads.
5 And they were commissioned not to kill those men, but to torment them for five months. And the torment they underwent was like that of a scorpion that stings a man.
6 And in those days men shall seek death and not find it; and shall desire to die, but death will flee from them.
7 The shapes of the locusts were like horses readied for battle, and on their heads were what resembled crowns of gold, and their faces were like men's faces.
8 And the hair of their heads was like that of women's, and their teeth were like those of lions.
9 They had breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots and many horses charging into battle.
10 They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails; and their power was to harm men for five months.
11 And they had a king over them, the angel of the Bottomless Pit, whose name in Hebrew is *Abaddon*, and in Greek *Apollyon*.
12 One Woe is past, but look--two more Woes are to follow!
13 And the sixth angel blew, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar that is before God,
14 Saying to the sixth angel who had the shofar: Release the four angels who are bound in the great river Euphrates!
15 And the four angels were freed, who had been prepared for one hour, one day, one month, and one year to slay a third of mankind.
16 And the number of the horsemen was two hundred million--I actually heard this number!
17 And in the vision I thus saw the horses and those who sat on them, with their breastplates of fire, and jacinth, and brimstone. The heads of the horses were like lions, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone.
18 By these three was a third of mankind slain--by fire, smoke, and brimstone, which came out of their mouths.
19 For their power is in their mouths and in their tails--for their tails were like those of snakes, and with the heads of those tails they hurt people.
20 And the rest of the men who were not killed by these plagues did not repent from the work of their hands, that they should not worship devils and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see, hear, nor speak.
21 Neither did they repent from their murders, nor their [drug abuse,] nor their sexual immorality, nor their thefts.

REVELATION CHAPTER 10

1 And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed in a cloud. A rainbow was over his head, his face was like the sun, and his feet were pillars of fire.
2 And he had in his hand a little open scroll. Then he set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the earth,
3 And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roars; and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices.
4 And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write, but then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me: Seal up the things that the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them.
5 And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and the earth, lifted up his hand to heaven,
6 And swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things in it; and the earth and the things in it; and the sea and the things in it that there would be no further delay!
7 But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when He begins to blow, the mystery of God will be completed, as he has declared to His servants, the prophets!
8 And the voice I heard from heaven spoke to me again, saying: Go and take the small scroll that is in the hand of the angel who stands upon the sea and the earth.

9 So I went to the angel, and told him: Give me the little scroll. He replied: Take it, and eat it. It will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey.
10 So I took the small scroll out of the angel's hand and ate it up. As he said, it was sweet as honey in my mouth, but as soon as I had eaten it, my stomach was bitter.
11 And he then told me, You must prophesy again before many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings.

REVELATION CHAPTER 11

1 And there was given to me a reed like a ruler, and the angel stood by, saying: Rise and measure the Temple of God and the altar, and those who worship within.
2 But the court that is outside the Temple, leave out and do not measure it, for it is given to the Gentiles. The Holy City they shall trod underfoot for forty-two months.
3 And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy, dressed in goatskins, for one thousand two hundred sixty days.
4 They are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.
5 And if any man will hurt them, fire proceeds out of their mouths and burns up their enemies. Anyone who harms them must be slain in this manner.
6 They have the power to shut the heavens up so that it does not rain during the days they prophesy. They have power over the waters to turn them to blood; and they can smite the earth with plagues as often as they wish.
7 When they have finished their testimony, the Behemoth that ascends out of the Bottomless Pit will fight against them and kill them.
8 And their bodies will lie dead in the great city [--Jerusalem--] which is spiritually called *Sodom*, and *Egypt*, where also our Lord was crucified.
9 And those of the earth--all its peoples--will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and will not allow their dead bodies to be placed in graves.
10 And those who dwell upon the earth will rejoice over their deaths, and will send gifts to each other because these two prophets had tormented those who dwelt upon the earth.
11 But after three-and-a-half days, the breath of life from God entered into them, and they stood up on their feet--and great fear fell upon those who saw them.
12 And they heard a great voice from heaven say to them: Come up here! And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud as their enemies watched helplessly behind them.
13 Immediately there was a great earthquake, and a tenth part of Jerusalem fell; and seven thousand men died in the earthquake--and those who did not die were greatly afraid, and gave glory to the God of heaven.
14 The second Woe is past, but the third Woe now comes quickly.
15 The seventh angel blew, and there were great voices in heaven, saying: The kingdoms of this world have now become the kingdoms of our Lord God, and His Messiah--and He will reign forever and ever!
16 And the twenty-four elders that sat before God on their thrones fell upon their faces, and worshipped God,
17 Saying: We give you thanks, O Lord God Almighty, who is, and was, and is to come--because you have taken great power to Yourself, and have reigned!
18 And the nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead to be judged; and that You should bestow rewards to Your servants, the prophets, and to the righteous, and to those, small and great, who reverence Your Name; and that You should destroy those who destroy the earth.
19 And the Temple of God was opened in heaven, and in His Temple was seen the Ark of the Covenant; and there were lightnings, voices, thunderings, along with an earthquake and great hail.

REVELATION CHAPTER 12

1 And now there appeared a great wonder in the heavens: A woman clothed with the sun, with the moon beneath her feet; and upon her head was a crown of twelve stars.
2 And she, being pregnant, cried out in labor pains, and began to deliver.
3 And there appeared another wonder in the heavens: [Leviathan--] a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.
4 And his tail drew along a third part of the stars of the heavens, and he cast them to the earth. Then the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to deliver, intending to devour the child as soon as it was born.
5 And she delivered a male child who would rule all nations with a rod of iron--and her child was caught up to God and His throne.
6 And the woman, meanwhile, fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared for her by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.
7 Meanwhile, there was war in the heavens: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought back with his own angels.
8 But he did not prevail, neither could they remain in their Place in the heavens.
9 And now the great dragon was cast out--that old snake called the devil, and Satan, who deceives the whole world. He was cast down to the earth, and his angels with him.
10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: Now is come salvation, strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Messiah, for the accuser of our brethren is cast down--the same one who accused them before our God day and night.
11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and the Message of their testimony--and they did not love their lives, but submitted to death.
12 Therefore rejoice, you heavens, and you who dwell in them! But woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath [because he knows his time is about up]!
13 And when the devil saw that he was cast onto the earth, he persecuted the woman who had brought forth the male child.
14 But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle so that she could fly into the wilderness to her own Place, where she would be nourished for three-and-a-half years from the face of the dragon.
15 And the serpent expunged a flood of water from his mouth after the woman, hoping to carry her away and drown her.
16 But the earth helped the woman, and opened its mouth, swallowing the flood that the dragon had cast out of his mouth.
17 And the dragon was angry with the woman, and then went to make war against the remnant of her offspring, who keep the commands of God, and live and proclaim the testimony of Jesus Christ.

REVELATION CHAPTER 13

1 And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a Behemoth rise up out of the sea, with seven heads and ten horns; and upon his horns were ten crowns, and upon his heads was the name of blasphemy.

2 And the Behemoth I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were those of a bear, and his mouth was that of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and great authority.
3 And I saw one of his heads as if it were wounded to death. Then its deadly wound was healed, and all the world was amazed at the Behemoth.
4 And they worshipped the dragon which gave power to the Behemoth, saying: Who is like the Behemoth?! Who can make war with him?!
5 And his mouth was anointed to speak great things, and blasphemies; and power was given to him to continue forty-two months.
6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven.
7 And he was given power to make war against the righteous, and to overcome them. And power was given him over all families, tongues, and nations.
8 And all who dwell upon the earth shall worship him--those whose names are not written in the Scroll of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.
9 If any man can understand--let him understand!
10 He who leads [others] into captivity, shall go into captivity. He who kills with the sword, must be killed with the sword. Thus, the righteous must remain patient and in faith through it all.
11 And I beheld another Behemoth coming up out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon.
12 And he exercised all the power of the first Behemoth before him, and caused the earth and those who dwell therein to worship the first Behemoth, whose deadly wound was healed.
13 And he does great wonders, so that he makes fire come down from the heavens down to the earth in the sight of all men--
14 And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by means of those miracles that he had the power to do in the sight of the Behemoth. He said to those upon the earth that they should make an idol of the Behemoth, which had the wound made by a sword, yet did live.
15 And he had the power to give life to the idol of the Behemoth, that the image should both speak, and cause as many as would not worship its image to be killed.
16 And he causes all--both great and small, rich and poor, free and slave--to receive a mark on their right hand, or in their foreheads.
17 And no man could buy or sell except for those who had the mark, or the Behemoth's name, or the number of his name.
18 Now here is wisdom: Let he who has understanding decipher the number of the Behemoth, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666 [and 616].

REVELATION CHAPTER 14

1 And I looked, and there stood a Lamb on Mount Zion, and with him were a hundred and forty-four thousand who had his Father's name written in their foreheads.
2 And I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waterfalls, and like the sound of a great thunderclap. I also heard the voice of harpers playing their harps.
3 And they sang a new song before the throne, and the four beasts, and the elders. No man could learn that song except for the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth.
4 These are those who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes, and were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits unto God and the Lamb.
5 And in their mouth was found no guile, for they are blameless before the throne of God.
6 And I saw another angel fly in the midst of the heavens, having the everlasting Gospel to preach to those who dwell upon the earth, and to every nation, family, tongue, and people.
7 He said with a loud voice: Fear God, and give glory to Him--for the hour of His judgment has come! Worship Him who made heaven, earth, the sea, and the fountains of waters.
8 And there followed another angel, saying: Babylon is utterly demolished! That great city, because she made all nations drink the wine of the wrath of her fornication.
9 And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice: If any man worships the Behemoth and his idol, and receives his mark in his forehead or in his hand,
10 The same shall drink the wine of God's wrath, which is poured out in full strength into the cup of His indignation--and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb.
11 And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever--and they have no rest day and night, who worship the Behemoth and his image, and who receive the mark of his name.
12 This is why the righteous must remain patient. Here are they who keep the commands of God, and the faith of Jesus.
13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying to me: Write: *Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from this point on.* Yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors. Their deeds follow them.
14 And I looked and beheld a white cloud, and one on the cloud sat, who looked like a human man. He wore a golden crown, and in his hand was a sharp sickle.
15 Then another angel came out of the Temple, crying with a loud voice to him who sat on the cloud: Thrust in your sickle, and reap--for the time has come to you to reap. The dried up wheat of the earth is ready!
16 And he that sat upon the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.
17 And another angel came out of the Temple in heaven, who also had a sharp sickle.
18 And another angel came out from the altar who had power over fire. He cried with a loud voice to him that had the sharp sickle, saying: Thrust in your sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe.
19 And the angel thrust his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.
20 And the winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed out from the winepress that reached up even to the horses' bridles, one hundred-and-eighty miles long.

REVELATION CHAPTER 15

1 And I saw another sign in the heavens, great and marvelous: Seven angels having the last seven plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.
2 And I saw what looked like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who had gotten their victory over the Behemoth, and over his idol, and his mark, and over the number of his name. They stood on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.
3 And they sang the song of Moses the servant of God; and they sang the song of the Lamb, saying: *Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty--just and true are Your ways, You King of the righteous!*
4 *Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your Name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments are revealed.*
5 And after I had looked--behold, the Temple of the Tabernacle of Testimony in heaven was opened.

6 Then the seven angels came out of the Temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden belts.
7 One of the four [sphinxes] then gave to the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever.
8 And the Temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from His power. No man was able to enter into the Temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.

REVELATION CHAPTER 16

1 And I heard a great voice out of the Temple saying to the seven angels: Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.
2 So the first went out and poured out his vial upon the earth, and horrible, grievous sores fell upon the men who had the mark of the Behemoth, and those who worshipped his idol.
3 Then the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea, and it became like the blood of a dead man--and every living thing in the sea died.
4 Then the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of water, and they became blood too.
5 And I heard the angel of the waters say: You are righteous, O Lord, who are, and were, and shall be--because you have judged earth in this way.
6 For men have shed the blood of the righteous and the prophets, and you have given them blood to drink in return. They deserve it!
7 And I heard another angel out of the altar say: Indeed, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are your judgments!
8 Then the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun, and power was given him to scorch men with fire.
9 And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, who has power over these plagues--and men refused to repent and give Him glory.
10 Then the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the [political system and territories of] the Behemoth, and his kingdom was full of darkness; and people gnawed their tongues for the pain.
11 And they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and they did not repent of their deeds.
12 Then the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates, and its waters dried up to prepare the way for the kings of the East.
13 Then I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the Behemoth, and out of the mouth of the False Prophet.
14 These are the spirits of devils working miracles; and they go forth to the kings of the earth and of the whole world to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.
15 [And Christ says:] Behold, I come as a thief! Blessed is he who watches and keeps his clothes on, lest he walk about naked, and his shame be seen by all.
16 And he gathered them together into a place called in Hebrew, *Armageddon*.
17 Then the seventh angel poured his vial into the atmosphere, and a great voice came out of the Temple in heaven from the throne. It said: It is done!
18 And there were voices, thunders, lightnings--and there was a great earthquake such as had never happened since man had been on the earth. It was an earthquake beyond belief!
19 And Jerusalem was divided into three parts, and the cities of the Gentiles fell; and great Babylon came to God's remembrance, that he would give her the cup of wine of the fierceness of His wrath.
20 And every island fled away, and the mountains flattened.
21 And there fell upon men a great hail from the sky, each stone weighing around seventy-five pounds! But men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, for the plague was unbelievably great.

REVELATION CHAPTER 17

1 Then one of the seven angels with the seven vials came up and spoke to me, saying: Come here, and I will show you God's judgment against the Great Prostitute that sits on many waters,
2 With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and with whom the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her sexual immorality.
3 So he carried me away in the spirit to the wilderness, and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet-colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, with seven heads and ten horns.
4 And the woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and decked out with gold and precious stones and pearls; and she had in her hand a golden goblet full of abominations and the filthiness of her sexual immorality.
5 And upon her head was a mysterious name that was written: *Babylon the Great, the mother of prostitutes and abominations of the earth.*
6 And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the righteous, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus--and when I saw her, I wondered with great amazement.
7 Then the angel said to me: Why did you marvel? I will explain to you the mystery of the woman and the Behemoth that carries her, which has seven heads and ten horns.
8 The Behemoth you saw was, and is not, and shall ascend out of the Bottomless Pit, and go into perdition; and they who dwell on the earth--whose names are not written in the Scroll of Life from the foundation of the world--shall be amazed when they behold the Behemoth that was, and is not, and yet is.
9 And here is the mind that has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains upon which the woman sits.
10 And there are seven kings. Five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he does appear, he must continue on for a short space of time.
11 And the Behemoth that was, and is not--even he is the eighth, and is from the seven, and goes into perdition.
12 And the ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not received a kingdom yet; but they receive power as kings for one hour with the Behemoth.
13 These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength to the Behemoth.
14 These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of Lords and King of Kings--and those who are with him are called, and chosen, and are faithful.
15 And he said to me: The waters you saw where the prostitute sits are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.
16 And the ten horns you saw upon the Behemoth--these shall hate the prostitute, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh and burn her with fire.
17 For God has put in their hearts to fulfill His will, and to agree, and give their kingdom to the Behemoth until the decrees of God shall be fulfilled.
18 And the woman you saw is the great city [of Rome] that reigns over the kings of the earth.

REVELATION CHAPTER 18

1 And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power--and the earth was lit up with his radiance.

2 And he cried out with a loud voice: Babylon the Great is utterly destroyed, and become the habitation of devils, and the place of every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hateful bird.
3 For all nations have drunk the wine of the wrath of her sexual immorality; and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her; and the merchants of the earth have waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.
4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying: Come out of her, my people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that you do not receive her plagues.
5 For her sins have reached up to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.
6 Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double it--yes, double it again, according to her deeds! Give her twice what she gave others to drink!
7 How much she glorified herself, and lived luxuriously--so give her torment and sorrow in return! For she said to herself, "I reign as a Queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow!"
8 Therefore, her plagues shall come forth in one day--death, mourning, and famine; and she will be utterly burned up with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her.
9 And the kings of the earth who have committed fornication with her shall bewail her, and grieve for her when they see the smoke of her burning,
10 As they stand afar off for the fear of her torment, saying: Alas! Alas! That great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment is come!
11 And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their wares anymore.
12 The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all your wood, and all sorts of vessels of ivory, and all manner of vessels of most precious wood, and brass, and iron, and marble,
13 And cinnamon, and perfume, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and animals, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men,
14 And the fruits that your soul lusted after are departed from you--and all the things that were dainty and delicious are gone from you, and you shall not find them again.
15 The merchants of these things, who were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing,
16 And saying: Alas! Alas! That great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls!
17 For in one hour all these great riches have come to naught. And every ship captain, and all the men in ships, and sailors, and as many as who made their living by the trade of the sea, stood afar off,
18 And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning: What city is like this great city?!
19 And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying: Alas! Alas! For that great city that made everyone rich who had a ship to trade with her because of her wealth--in one hour, she is made desolate!
20 Rejoice over her collapse, you in heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her.
21 And a mighty angel took up a great rock like a millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying: Thus, with violence, shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall never be found again.
18 And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning: What city is like this great city?!
19 And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying: Alas! Alas! For that great city that made everyone rich who had a ship to trade with her because of her wealth--in one hour, she is made desolate!
20 Rejoice over her, you in heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her.
21 And a mighty angel took up a great rock like a millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying: Thus, with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall never be found again.
22 And the sound of harpers, musicians, and pipers, and trumpeters shall be heard no more in you! And no craftsman, regardless of his trade, shall ever be seen in you again; and the sound of a stone grinding grain will never be heard in you either.
23 And the light of a candle shall never shine in you at all; and the voice of a bridegroom and a bride shall never be heard in you again, for your merchants were the great men of the earth; and by your sorceries were all nations deceived.
24 And in her was found the blood of the prophets, and of the righteous, and of all who were slain upon the earth.

REVELATION CHAPTER 19

1 And after these things I heard the thunderous voice of a multitude in heaven, saying: Hallelujah! Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power to the Lord our God!
2 For true and righteous are His punishments, for He has judged the Great Whore that corrupted the earth with her [spiritual] adulteries! He has avenged the blood of His servants that she shed with her own hands!
3 And again they cried: Hallelujah! And the smoke of the Whore ascended up forever and ever.
4 And the twenty-four elders, and the four beasts, fell on their faces and worshipped God who sat on the throne, saying: Amen! Hallelujah!
5 And a voice came forth from the throne, saying: Praise our God, all you servants, and those who fear Him, both insignificant and mighty!
6 And I heard what sounded like a great multitude that sounded like the roar of many waters and the crash of many thunderings, saying: Hallelujah! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!
7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready!
8 And to the Bride was granted that she should be dressed in fine linen, pure and white, representing the godly deeds of the righteous.
9 And [the angel] said to me: Write this: *Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb!* Then he added: These are the true sayings of God!
10 And I fell at his feet to do obeisance, but he said to me: Don't do that! I am a fellow servant of God with you, and with your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus! Worship God, for the testimony of Jesus is the [revelation] of all that prophecy pointed to!
11 And I saw heaven revealed, and there was a white horse, the rider of which was called *Faithful* and *True*--and in righteousness does he judge and make war!
12 His eyes were as flaming fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written that no man, other than himself, knew.
13 And he was clothed in a cloak dipped in blood, and his name is: *The Word of God*!
14 And the armies of heaven followed him upon white horses, and they were clothed in fine linen, clean and white.
15 And out of his mouth goes a razor sharp sword for him to smite the [pagan] nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron; and he treads upon the winepress of the fierce wrath of Almighty God!
16 And upon his cloak and thigh is written a name: *King of Kings and Lord of Lords*!

17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun who cried out to the fowls that fly in the midst of the heavens: Come! Gather together for the supper of the Great God,
18 That you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and mighty warriors…that you may eat the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, slave and free, and small and great!
19 And I saw the Behemoth, and the rulers of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him who sat on the horse, and upon his army.
20 And the Behemoth was taken, and with him the False Prophet who wrought miracles before him, with which he had deceived those who received the Mark of the Behemoth, and those who did obeisance to his idol. These two were cast alive into the Lake of Fire that burns with brimstone.
21 And the rest were slain by the sword of him who sat upon the horse with the sword that came out of his mouth--and all the birds gorged upon their flesh.

REVELATION CHAPTER 20

1 Then I saw an angel come down from heaven with the key to the Bottomless Pit and a great chain in his hand.
2 And he laid hold of the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years,
3 And then cast him into the Bottomless Pit, and shut him up, and put a seal upon him, so he could not deceive the nations until a thousand years be fulfilled. After that, he would be let out for a short time.
4 And I saw thrones, and people sat in them, and authority to judge was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Message of God, and those who had not worshipped the Behemoth, or his image, nor had received his mark upon their foreheads or in their hands. These all resurrected and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.
5 But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years had passed. This is the first resurrection.
6 Blessed and holy is he who has a part in the first resurrection. On these, the second death has no power. But they shall be the priests of God and Christ, and shall reign with him for a thousand years.
7 And when the thousand years pass, Satan shall be released from his prison,
8 And he shall go forth to deceive the nations on the four quarters of the earth--Gog and Magog--to gather them to battle. There are so many there that their number is like the sand of the sea!
9 And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and encompassed the camp of the righteous, and the beloved city--but fire came down from God in heaven, and consumed them.
10 And the devil who deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the Behemoth and False Prophet are, and they shall be tormented day and night forever and ever.
11 And I saw a great white throne, and Him who sat upon it, at whose face the earth and heavens fled away--and there was found no place for them.
12 And I saw the dead, great and small, stand before God, and the scrolls were unrolled, and another scroll was unrolled, which was the Scroll of Life. And the dead were judged out of the things written in the scrolls, according to their deeds.
13 And the sea gave up the dead in it, and death and *Sheol* delivered up the dead which were in them--and every man was judged according to his deeds.
14 And death and *Sheol* were cast into the Lake of Fire. This is the second death.
15 And whoever was not found written in the Scroll of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

REVELATION CHAPTER 21

1 And I saw new heavens and a new earth, for the first heavens and earth had passed away. There was also no more sea.
2 And I, John, saw the holy city--new Jerusalem--coming down from God out of heaven, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband.
3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying: Behold! The tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and "God with them" shall be their God!
4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there will be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things have passed away!
5 And He who sat upon the throne said: Behold! I recreate all things! And he said to me: Write--for these words are true and faithful!
6 And He said to me: It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega--the beginning and the end. I will give freely the fountain of the water of Life to anyone who is thirsty.
7 Him who overcomes will inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he will be my son.
8 But the fearful, the unbelieving, the abominable, the murderers, whoremongers, [drug-dealers], idolaters, and all liars will have their part in the lake of fire that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.
9 And one of the seven angels that had the seven vials full of the last seven plagues came to me, and said: Come here--I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife!
10 And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city--the holy Jerusalem--descending out of heaven from God,
11 Having the radiance of God--and her light was like a very precious stone, even like a jasper stone that was clear as crystal.
12 And it had a great high wall, with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the twelve gates. And each gate had a name of one of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:
13 On the east three gates, the north three gates, the south three gates, and the west three gates.
14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.
15 And he who talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall.
16 And the city is a square, with its length as long as its breadth. So he measured the city with the reed and it was fourteen hundred miles. Its length, breadth and height are all fourteen hundred miles.
17 And he measured its wall, which was two hundred and sixteen feet, the angel using a human measurement of eighteen inches per cubit.
18 And the building of its wall was of jasper, and the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.
19 And the foundations of the city wall were decorated with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second sapphire; the third chalcedony; the fourth emerald;
20 The fifth sardonyx; the sixth sardius; the seventh chrysolite; the eighth beryl; the ninth topaz; the tenth chrysoprasus; the eleventh jacinth; the twelfth amethyst.
21 And the twelve gates were twelve pearls. Each gate was made of one pearl. And the streets of the city were pure gold like transparent glass.
22 And I saw no Temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb are the Temple of the city!
23 And the city had no need for the sun or the moon to shine in it, for the radiance of God lights it, and the Lamb is that light.
24 And the nations of those that are saved shall walk in the light of it, and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it.
25 And its gates shall not be shut by day, for there is no night there.

26 And they shall bring the glory and honor of the Gentile nations into it.
27 And nothing that defiles, or that which works an abomination, or makes a lie--but only they whose names are written in the Lamb's Scroll of Life shall enter it.

REVELATION CHAPTER 22

1 And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb.
2 In the midst of its main thoroughfare, and on either side of the river, was the Tree of Life, which has twelve sorts of fruits, and gives fruit every month; and the tree's leaves are for the healing of the [Gentile] nations.
3 And there shall be no more curse [upon creation], but the throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him.
4 And they shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads.
5 And there will be no night there; and they need no candle, neither the light from the sun, for the Lord God gives them light, and they shall reign forever and ever.
6 And the angel said to me: These sayings are faithful and true. And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things that must shortly happen.
7 Behold, I come in a flash! Blessed is he who keeps the sayings of the prophecy of this book.
8 And I, John, saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel that had showed me these things.
9 Then the angel said to me: Don't do that! For I am your fellow servant, and the fellow servant of your brethren, the prophets, and of those who keep the sayings of this book. Worship God!
10 And he said to me: Don't seal up the sayings of the prophecy of this book, for the epoch is at hand.
11 He that is unjust--let him stay that way! He who is filthy, let him stay filthy! And he who is righteous, let him remain righteous; and he who is holy, let him remain holy!
12 Behold! I come in a flash, and my reward is with me, to give every man according to his deeds.
13 I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last!
14 Blessed are they who wash their robes, that they may have right to the Tree of Life, and may enter through the gates of the city.
15 For outside of it are [unrepentant] homosexuals, sorcerers, whoremongers, idolaters, and whoever loves and makes a lie.
16 I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify of these things to you in the churches. I am the root and offspring of David, and the Bright and Morning Star!
17 And the Spirit and the Bride say: "Come!" And let he who understands say: "Come!" And let he who is thirsty come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of Life freely.
18 For I testify to every man who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If he adds anything to these things written, God will add to him the plagues in this book.
19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the Scroll of Life, and out of the holy city, and from the things written in this book.
20 He who testifies these things says: Surely I come in a flash! Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus!